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**The Church in Mission in the Wake of Emerging
Indigenous Religious Trends in South Africa**

By

Resemate Klaas Tau

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the

DEPARTMENT OF MISSIOLOGY

of the

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

November 2007

PROMOTER: PROFESSOR PIETER VERSTER

DECLARATION

I declare that **The Church in Mission in the Wake of Emerging Indigenous Religious Trends in South Africa** is my own work and that any reference consulted will be acknowledged by a complete reference.

.....
R.K. Tau

.....
Date

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Finally, to God who regenerated me and gave me a new life through the blood of Jesus Christ and to the Holy Spirit for continual sanctification and inspiration. In looking back from where I came, to be where I am now is quiet an emotional subject on my part. Yet, when everything is said and done, like the Apostle Paul, may I say, "I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things forward to those which are ahead. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Summary

South Africa is characterised by breath-taking developments in all its major spheres of life, social, political, economic, cultural and religious, etc. After some decades of colonial rule, inter-racial strife and polarisation between races, South Africa prides herself in a “peaceful transition” from colonial and *Apartheid* rule to constitutional democracy ushered in during 1994. The success of South Africans in handling their multi-cultural diversity has made South Africa the primary object of world attention, a microcosm and a mirror image of the world itself. South Africa has correctly been described as “a world in one country” and a “rainbow nation”. However, recently, and just before and shortly after gaining freedom from its colonial and *Apartheid* past, indigenous religions in South Africa have re-emerged on the scene. They are highly critical of Christians in South Africa, and seem to delight in pointing out its failures during colonialism and the *Apartheid* era. They contest the Christian claim to uniqueness and final truth and also the right of Christians to convert others to their faith. They claim universal validity for themselves. They invite the Church to compromise and to cooperate.

In spite of all the outer show of resurgence by the indigenous religions, there is evidence of a growing spiritual vacuum in certain areas of our country. This is evidenced by increasing moral decay in the society, which prompted the government to launch the Moral Regeneration Movement.

This study examines the role of the Church in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends in South Africa. It seeks to discover *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa*. It seeks to explore whether elements of emerging indigenous religious trends in South Africa afforded the Church an opportunity to recoil under the glaring failures of the past or an alternative opportunity of declaring its faith. It argues that the Church has a critical role to play in South Africa only if it would strongly renew itself and engage in mission. Practical means of social involvement are given prominence in this study.

Opsomming

Suid-Afrika word op alle belangrike lewensterreine, soos die sosiale, politieke, ekonomiese, kulturele en godsdienstige terreine, deur asemrowende ontwikkelings gekenmerk. Suid-Afrika kan na 'n aantal dekades van koloniale oorheersing, rassewrywing en rassepolarisasie met reg trots voel op die "vredesame oorgang" vanaf die koloniale en Apartheidsregering na 'n konstitusionele demokrasie wat in 1994 van stapel gestuur is. Die sukses wat Suid-Afrikaners met die hantering van hulle multikulturele verskeidenheid gehad het, het Suid-Afrika in die middelpunt van die wêreld se belangstelling geplaas, 'n mikrokosmos en 'n spieëlbeeld van die wêreld self. Inheemse godsdienste het egter onlangs, net vóór en ná vryheid van die koloniale en Apartheidsverlede verkry is, weer op die toneel verskyn. Hulle staan baie krities teenoor Christene in Suid-Afrika en put skynbare genot daaruit om die Christendom se mislukking tydens kolonialisme en die Apartheidsera uit te wys. Hulle betwis Christene se aansprake op uniekheid en die finale waarheid, asook Christene se reg om andere tot hulle geloof te bekeer. Hulle eis vir hulleself universele geldigheid op. Hulle nooi die Kerk uit om kompromieë aan te gaan en met hulle saam te werk.

Daar is ten spyte van die uiterlike vertoon van 'n opbloei onder inheemse godsdienste getuienis van 'n toenemende geestelike lugleegte in sekere dele van ons land. Dit word aangedui deur 'n toenemende morele verval in die samelewing, wat die regering daartoe genoop het om die Morele Herbewapeningsbeweging te loods.

Hierdie studie ondersoek die Kerk se rol in die lig van opkomende inheemse godsdienstrominge in Suid-Afrika. Dit probeer agterkom hoe die missionêre Kerk in die lig van opkomende inheemse godsdienstrominge haar lewe en praktyke behoort te orden ten einde vir die inheemse mense in Suid-Afrika tot 'n positiewe getuienis te wees. Dit probeer verder agterkom of elemente van die opkomende inheemse godsdienstrominge in Suid-Afrika die Kerk daartoe bring om as gevolg van mislukkings in die verlede terug te deins en of die Kerk dit as nog 'n geleentheid kan beskou om haar geloof te bely. Die studie argumenteer dat die Kerk slegs 'n rol in Suid-Afrika te speel het as dit sigself deeglik vernuwe en by sending betrokke raak. Hierdie studie stel praktiese maniere om sosiaal betrokke te raak, voorop.

Key Terms

1. African Traditional Religion
2. African Independent Churches
3. Africanisation
4. Globalisation
5. Culture
6. Nature of the Church
7. Mission
8. Contextualisation
9. Conformity
10. Witnessing

Sleutelsterme

1. Tradisionele Afrika-godsdiens
2. Onafhanklike Afrika-kerke
3. Afrikanisering
4. Globalisering
5. Kultuur
6. Die aard van die Kerk
7. Sending
8. Kontekstualisering
9. Konformiteit
10. Getuienis

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Research Problem

South Africa is characterised by breath-taking developments in all its major spheres of life: social¹, political², economic, cultural³ and religious. After some decades of colonial rule, inter-racial strife and polarisation between races⁴, South Africa prides herself on a “peaceful transition” from colonial and *Apartheid* rule to constitutional democracy⁵ ushered in during 1994.

From the minority, parliamentary sovereignty system upheld by the Nationalist Party for decades, South Africa now parades one of the dynamic, modern, progressive and democratic constitutions in which the collective aspirations of the “new nation” is embodied.

¹ Whereas the old South African Constitution did not have the human rights bill, the new Constitution entrenches it. Consequently, the human rights bill helps to curb “prejudicial and injurious behaviour of certain parties over other parties, or as the restoration of a historic victim’s status equal that of his historic suppressor” (Maritz 2000:28)

² Before 1994 some races mainly of colour were politically disenfranchised in South Africa and legally discriminated against on the basis of race and colour.

³ For instance, Balcomb (1996:8) characterises the new South Africa in the following manner, “The space for cultural contestation has become open. Sangomas open conferences for intellectuals, praise singers enter parliament, whites go to soccer matches, blacks to rugby matches, gays parade in the streets and born again Christians take to the streets in protest”.

⁴ Prior 1994, and in realising the Apartheid system, South Africa was divided into separate national administrative states. Some of these were already independent states: Transkei and Ciskei for the Xhosa nationalists; Lebowa, Gazankulu, for the Pedi and Shangaan nationalists respectively; KwaZulu, and KwaNdebele, for the Zulu and Ndebele nationalists; Qwaqwa and KaNgwane for South Sotho and Swazi nationalists, and Bophuthatswana and Venda for the Tswana and Venda nationalists. This was meant to enhance self-determination based on race and culture; but most of these turned out to be the means to practise exclusivity and unhealthy competition, polarising one race against another.

⁵ Desmond Tutu (2004:34) regards the transition from Apartheid to democracy as an answer to prayer. He declared, “How else, too, to account for a reasonably peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy when most had expected us to be overwhelmed by the most ghastly bloodbath – unless we were prayed for. So we made a transition that most described as miraculous”.

The success of South Africans in handling their multi-cultural diversity has made South Africa the primary object of world attention, a macrocosm and a mirror image of the world itself. South Africa has correctly been described as “a world in one country” (Smit in Koopman 2002:450) and a “rainbow nation” (c.f. Jafta 2001). Clearly, this indicates how proud South Africans are of their “new” country, and the phrase, “Proudly South African,” has become a catchword.

Moreover, regular emphasis by South African progressive leaders on basic human freedoms, human rights, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, equality before the law, the right to participation and education, a multiparty political system with periodic free and fair elections by secret ballot under the terms of a representative and participatory constitution as well as declared commitment to a less restricted free market economic system, all combined to make South Africa the hope of the rest of Africa and its shining example in many respects.

Generally, South Africans are self-confident as a progressive nation and a shining example to the world especially in regard to how diverse peoples⁶ of different ethnicity and races, living in one country, could amicably sort out their radical problems imposed by their respective cultural differences and endeavour to become one nation⁷. This is indeed “the miracle of South Africa”.

Today, in spite of the high incidence of crime, sweeping incidence of corruption and the prevalence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic (cf. Goba 1998), South Africa is well grounded and has spelled out its ideal course of being a non-racial, non-sexist democratic country⁸. To crown it all, South Africa has now rejoined the international community after decades of being isolated from participation in the United Nations organs’ programmes.

Balcomb (1998:55) sums it all up for us by saying, “The miracle of South Africa’s political transformation is being celebrated globally. Our president is the darling of the

⁶ There are eleven official languages in South Africa. Each language represents a race or a tribe. However, there are more than eleven different tribes in South Africa given the fact that the San are also indigenous people of South Africa.

⁷ The Congress of Democratic South Africa, CODESA, has been a successful instrument in bringing together diverse ethnic cultures in South Africa to build one country and one nation. Programmes such as “Nation Building” are also well known in the country.

⁸ Jafta (2001:123) points out that “Inclusivity, non-racialism, gender sensitivity, transparency and empowerment were all seen as priorities in the nation-building programme”.

world – admired, loved and respected by all. Our archbishop is also the darling of the world, admired, loved, and respected by all. Just to be in their presence is for most people, a never-to-be-forgotten experience”.

However, recently, and just before and shortly after gaining freedom from its colonial and *Apartheid* past, indigenous religions in South Africa re-emerged on the scene. These are variously known and identified collectively as *Third World Theologies* (Daneel 1989), *Local Theologies* (Schreiter 1985), *Elements of emerging missionary Paradigm* (Bosch 1991) *Elements of Grassroots Theology* (Mthembu 1996) and sometimes *Christian Theologies* (Thislethwaite & Engel 1998). In South Africa perhaps Black Theology (BT), Contextual Theology (CT), African Theology (AT), African Independent Churches (AIC), African Traditional Religions (ATR) are some of the more familiar ones. They have all emerged on the scene creating and sustaining the emerging indigenous religious trends in South Africa. This study will hereinafter refer to them collectively as *elements of merging indigenous religious trends*.

Diverse as they are after the sound of their names, elements of emerging indigenous religious trends came onto the scene largely protesting against and criticising colonialism⁹ and apartheid, and what has come to be called “Orthodox Christianity” or the historical Church for a variety of reasons (Tingle 1992), some of which will be noted during the course of this study.

Leading agents of these elements are Black theologians who themselves are “Christian” believers and are intensely concerned with the relevance and credibility of the gospel among Black people in South Africa (cf Kritzinger 1989). They are, therefore, not an isolated group of Black academics, but people deeply involved in the life situation of the Black church.

Generally, according to Mthembu (1996), emerging indigenous religions seek, not to abandon but to indigenise the Christian faith, by liberating the Gospel from the imposed ideology of the white supremacy, and to free Black South Africans from oppression by reviving traditional virtues of African spirituality as an alternative way of life and practice. It is often contended that, in interpreting the Bible, White missionaries did not

⁹ Venter (1998:430) proposes that “Colonialism was part of the early expansion of the capitalist world system, which led to the formation of nation states in Europe and in the colonies.”

take the virtues of the African culture seriously. By and large, they were against them if not openly denigrating them.

The challenge of the elements of emerging indigenous religious trends in South Africa to the Christian faith is evaluated under the title borne by this study, *The Church in Mission in the Wake of Indigenous Religious Trends in South Africa*.

Having come onto the scene, elements of emerging indigenous religious trends have become largely aggressive and assertive, challenging the validity of the Christian faith, especially the historical Christian Church and its teachings and practices have been seriously questioned. But they also challenge “those Black ministers who are aloof from their members to come down from their ivory towers and to share in the toil and tumble of their charges’ everyday experience in order to acquire relevance” (Motlhabi 1984:122).

They criticise the historical Church for instance, for its missionary enterprise, which was characterised by paternalism, or for its apparent alliance with colonialism in the past. For this reason, the Church is called the “handmaiden” of colonialism¹⁰ (Pityana 1974:60; Mofokeng 1983:15). Although, some missionaries “might not [consciously or not] have sought political conquest, but it became an important and vital cog in their Christian mission” (Motlhabi 1973:11)

Presently, some elements of emerging indigenous religious trends, for instance, ATR have moved from the private sphere, where they had been relegated or suppressed to the public sphere¹¹ where they now demand attention and recognition¹². They are currently reinforced and fuelled by concepts pervasively known as “African renaissance” and “reconstruction of Africa” and would like to make their contribution, too, in building the post-*Apartheid* nation¹³.

¹⁰ This is, however, disputed by Chitando (1998:77) who said, “The popular caricature of missionaries as handmaidens of colonialism is too simplistic”

¹¹ The University of Zululand is now allowing the practice of indigenous religion on its Campus. On the 10th September 2007, it announced that traditional healers and counsellors would be allowed to help students on its Campus (SABC, SAFM-PM Show; 10/9/07). Beside that, the Government has donated the farm, Vlakplaas, where freedom fighters were tortured, for developing traditional healers’ projects.

¹² At the time of the writing of this study traditional healers sought to extend their services to public health institutions seeking to work jointly with institutions using conventional medicines.

¹³ This is largely done in the context that “all religions were perceived as having a contribution to make in fermenting a new democratic spirit” (Jafta 2001:128). Moreover, leaders of African Traditional Religion joined other leaders of major religions (Hindu, Jewish, Christians, Muslim, Buddhist and Bahai) in the

Central to these is the entrenchment of freedom of religion in the South African Constitution¹⁴ which has made it possible for those distinct ethnic religious sects and/or otherwise all to be at home in South Africa. Today, Africa has come home in fulfilment of the popular expression, *Mayibuye iAfrika*, "Let Africa come home".

Throughout decades of colonialism and *Apartheid* rule, some elements of emerging indigenous religious trends appeared to be dormant, silent, on the defensive, lying mainly below the surface of Christianity. In the main, they were marginalized, more than less accepting the superiority of the Christian faith (Seamands 1982). These indigenous institutions were either destroyed suppressed or modified (Mthembu 1996). At best, African societies and their institutions became, to some extent Christianised, colonised and westernised.

Missionary schools were established in South Africa resulting in the majority of the adherents of emerging indigenous religions being educated or brought up in missionary institutions. In the course of all this time, missionaries were less sensitive to indigenous religions, if not been more activists for their destruction. Although, there may have been some liberal missionaries who may not have cared much of the traditional African institutions, they nevertheless employed some of these as part of the gospel message.

However, it should not be forgotten that the centripetality¹⁵ of Christianity might have contributed to the fact that majority of Africans themselves voluntarily abandoned some of their religious customs and embraced the Christian faith. The value of education, missionary lifestyle and medicine, amongst others, might have been highly attractive to indigenous people. But it is impossible to sidestep the Word of God when correctly preached. It might have been in this context that some had to surrender their divining bones and other divining utensils to the burning service to be destroyed forever, as people were attracted to the life and practice of the Church. Thus, education, evangelism and medicine constituted primary elements of the centripetality of the Church.

quest for morality at the Moral Summit One (22 October 1998) and Moral Summit Two (28 January 1999).

¹⁴ "The freedom of religion," observes Warnic (2001:158) "is high on the social agenda today. Fundamental rights in general have virtually become the national law of these post-modern times. And the freedom of religion no doubt has a crucial role to play in the catalogue of fundamental rights". However, Fr Drinan (in Jafta 2001:130) sees a different picture. "If religion was entrenched in the Constitution," he argued, "religious bodies might be manipulated by the government".

But the Christian faith was not the only factor in displacing African religious customs. The other factor has been Western civilisation. Indigenous religions retreated from the public scene much early when they were “shaken by the emergence of the dominant Western civilization in South Africa. Western religion, secularism, science, technology, weaponry, administration, health services, education – all contributed to the undermining of the validity of old beliefs, values and norms” (Nürenberger 1984:57).

The extent of the intrusion of the Western civilisation in South African has telling facts. Scores of observations would corroborate the fact that “during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Western incursion into the continent made such radical changes in the people’s ways of thinking and acting that it is rather a matter of conjecture as to what constituted the actual religious traditions of the people of Africa to this time – “Africa has become radically westernised during the last two centuries¹⁶” (Thorpe 1992:28; also Nürenberger 1984; Bosch 1991; Mthembu 1996; etc.). Perhaps Eschabach (1977) sums it all up by saying that Christianity came to Africa through its Western incarnation replicating the Western culture as it advances. It could not have been otherwise Africa was immediately accessible to, and permeable by, not only Christian faith but the Western incarnation of this faith. Being “radically westernised” Africans were socio-culturally alienated and were “captives” in Western cultures. Two crucial factors are implied, the “Christian faith,” and the “incarnation of this faith”. However, it is difficult to measure their independence from each other.

Large parts or the whole of indigenous religions and African culture could have been swept away or permanently set aside by the power of the tide of colonialism and Western culture had it not been for the start of a series of early breakaways of some Africans to form AIC independent from missionary administrations.

AIC emerged, operated independently from missionary institutions and recaptured some of the traditional African spiritual virtues and distilled them as part of their mission, but

¹⁶ People’s ways of thinking and acting having been changed, the role of the traditional medicine man who was most the feared if not respected in the village was superseded by the western scientific doctor; the power of the traditional chief which could not be disputed was curtailed by magistrates; ancestral beliefs gave way to the Christian faith; communal land ownership and communal life gave way to capitalism and individualism, eroding the extended family structures in its wake; polygamous relationships were superseded by the entrenchment of the monogamous relationship; the traditional court was replaced by the magistrate or the commissioner, and urbanisation undermined the clan system and tribalism, etc. Generally, the monopoly of the village life came to an end and Africa became exposed to the Western world and later to globalisation, and in the process became less unique.

also copied most of the new culture and faith. From this time, the valorisation of African cultures took roots and African culture found new home in the AIC (cf. Ngumi E:/AICS.HTM).

Now, the main issue is that the long awaited freedom from colonialism and *Apartheid* has come to South Africa; the playing field seems to have been levelled. Christianity is no longer the dominant religion, and the religious situation is changing into one of religious pluralism — South Africans already talk about being a “rainbow nation” and it is not certain what would stop them short to talk about having a “rainbow religion” or “rainbow culture”.

One of the challenges faced by adherents of indigenous religions is that, having been “radically westernised,” exposed to modernism, materialism, globalisation¹⁷ and secularisation and to the Christian faith for that matter, how much of the African culture would be part of daily life in the pluralized South Africa? This has been the concerns of Bliese (1997) who talked about globalization and its impact upon traditional worldview; and of Venter (1998) who explored the concept of globalisation and the emergence of the African Initiated Churches. It has neither been less the concern of Martin Ott (1998) who saw new challenges for the ‘local’ in the ‘global’.

It is then amidst of such challenges as these, that post Apartheid Africans are faced with an awesome task, and the latent question becomes, what do we do with the freedom that we had sought and had fought for so long and have now achieved? Do we go for Africanisation, rebuilding ourselves after “African ideals”, unique in our own full-fledged African culture in the pluralized society, or do we stay in the already globalised culture or rebuild our country for the well-being of all humanity in general?

In other words, is this freedom to be celebrated in the context of African culture or in the context of emerging global culture, or both? These are serious questions facing emerging indigenous religions seeking to Africanise the society.

¹⁷ According to van der Walt (2003:57), “Globalisation today implies that the Western world controls the whole world for its own benefit. It especially applies to the economy where this domination enriches the West and impoverishes Africa and other poor nations. Africans’ mismanagement of their economies has played into the hands of the West which now dictates economic policies and supervises their implementation. It is true also politically.”

However, elements of emerging indigenous religious trends have generally inclined to Africanism as the way forward. Terms such as "Black Theology, African Theology and others are on their own indications as to the direction Africans wish to take. Generally, trends are cast toward the Africanisation of Christianity, in which regard AIC have already taken a lead.

Kritzinger (1995) and Sprunger (1973) talking in the context of Africanisation, argue that "Somebody who wants to make a difference to contemporary South Africa simply has to be aware of the issues involved in religious pluralism, intercultural communication, political liberation and the growth of the African Initiated Church". Earlier, Sprunger (1973:163) warned, "I would go so far as to say, that there will be NO RELEVANT theology in Southern Africa and in Africa as long as the Universal Church and the Mission Churches do not start looking at, listening to, and learning from our separatist brothers". This means the Church should reconsider its mission, and whatever should be learned there is the validity of the essence of the African culture.

The commitment to valorisation of the African culture is also notable in what de Gruchy (1979) observed. According to him, it is apparent that the main intent of the elements of emerging indigenous religious trends have not only been seeking to struggle "for the liberation from socio-political bondage" but also for rebuilding up the Black community who had been psychologically destroyed by the superiority complex of the Whites. Generally, this indeed, says that elements of emerging indigenous religious trends have a mission – Rebuilding up the Black community characterised by African values.

Whatever this rebuilding will entail suggests to some extent recapturing and valorising the African worldview, which has been lost; African community-hood and a sense of solidarity, which is mooted to have disappeared with the advent of colonialism and Western civilization. Again, de Gruchy (1979:157) points out that, in rebuilding the African community-hood, emerging indigenous religions find common ground in recapturing the sense of African communalism. Perhaps it would be helpful to quote him at this stage.

An interesting and helpful illustration of this relationship between indigenisation and contextualization in black theology is seen in the concept of communalism. In traditional African society, personal identity has always been societal with strong emphasis on the kinship

system. Kinship ties played an important role in the emergence of the African independent churches, for they supported such ties, or less, in detribalised situations, provided the sense of belonging so fundamental to African society. Black theology likewise sees the importance of the kinship system and relates it to the biblical concept of corporate personality.

Indigenisation, Contextualization, Black Theology and African Independent Churches referred to by de Gruchy above, are elements of emerging indigenous religious trends; they are elements of grassroots theology (Mthembu 1996). Rebuilding of the African community is the general purpose for which they have resurfaced – the re-Africanisation of the African (Mthembu 1996).

Matters being thus perceived, elements of indigenous religious trends have an unfinished agenda on their hands, half of which has not been done, if ever they intended to follow through their intended agenda. Nevertheless, probabilities point to the fact that the road of re-Africanisation of the African is seriously potholed because of the emerging trends of globalisation. It is within these contexts that Martin Ott (1998:99) observed,

One could question, is there a need for (local) inculturation if the process of globalisation is speeding up in such a way? The worldwide spread of information, techniques, economic co-operation, music, entertainment, business, food (like coca cola and pizza) destroys local heritage and habits. No doubt about it. Even if one might regret this development for good reasons, the fact remains and dominates the lives of an increasing number of people”.

Having said that, Martin Ott (1998:100) delivered a verdict: “In my view the golden years of inculturation are over, as far as the dialogue between faith and a local culture is concerned. Ott (1998) might be of the opinion that the emphasis on going inculturation in times like these goes against the flow and that trends toward becoming particularists in this era might result in Africa dropping out of the universal trends of globalisation.

This study attempts to respond to these challenges by focusing mainly on some of the issues raised by those elements of emerging indigenous religious trends which have reached their empirical stage, some of which have already been mentioned above. For the sake of convenience, we shall mention them once more; *Third World Theologies*

(Daneel 1989), *Local Theologies* (Schreiter 1985), *Elements of emerging missionary Paradigm* (Bosch 1991) *Grassroots Theology* (Mthembu 1996), *Liberation Theologies*, *Black Theology (BT)*, *Contextual Theology (CT)*, *African Theology (AT)*, *African Independent Churches (AICs)*, *African Traditional Religions (ATR)*.

Diverse as these elements of emerging indigenous religions are, they differ from one another in many significant ways. But they all emphasise different aspects of Africanisation. For instance, Black Theology differs from African Theology, and Contextualization from AICs, etc. Nonetheless, they also share many characteristics. On the whole, however, they attempt to reassert and pay homage to the African psyche.

Again, diversified as they may be, no attempt at this stage will be made to draw a clear line of distinction between them since they are mainly considered as forms of contextualization clamouring for the revitalization of the African culture in the context of modernity and socio-religious pluralism. Moreover, one of the ways advocated mainly and mostly by emerging indigenous religions in their attempt to revitalise the African culture, has always been to devalue or criticise the Christian faith, not only in terms of its content, but also in terms of origin and implementation, and therefore, this has strong missiological implications.

However, having had said this, it is generally agreed that elements of indigenous religious trends are a normal inclination, especially in some previously colonised countries in which political independence has taken place. The emergence of indigenous religions is simply characteristic of post-colonial situations but can lead to strong nationalistic trends and unhealthy patriotism. Seamands (1982), for example, studied the "Resurgence of non-Christian Religions" in Asia. He distinguished between three forms which the resurgence of indigenous religions were taking: (a) revival, (b) reform, and (c) restatement. We wish to follow his lead in this regard.

According to Seamands (1982), revival of indigenous religions comes mainly because of political independence. This is a situation in which people, now as the new nation, would seek religious foundations or symbols to reassert themselves and to distinguish and their political system and to help maintain unity and identity in their countries. At the lowest level, the tendency is often inclined to establish the state religions that are making the religion of the majority the national religion.

Unfortunately in some countries the revival movement of indigenous religions has often resulted in the roles of Christian expatriate missionaries being officially curtailed (e.g. Burma in 1966). Several Muslim countries have stopped the re-entry of missionaries (cf. Seamands 1982). But where the roles of expatriate missionaries were not curtailed, e.g. in countries like South Africa, the role of missionaries in the historical past has been severely criticised if not ridiculed (cf. Ngungi wa Thiong 1972).

Another phenomenon of emerging indigenous religious trends, which have been observed empirically, is reform. This is the situation whereby some changes brought by the Christian faith have been adapted and more preferred than some of the traditional religious practices. Preferred or welcomed changes, for example, include education, government, health administration, etc. Where Christianity has had some dramatic impact it is through its insistence on higher moral standards the consequence of which resulted in non-Christian religions abolishing some of their grosser practices such as headhunting, witch hunting, infanticide, and to some degree, polygamy (cf. Seamands 1982). These went hand in hand with the adoption of western civilisation.

Yet another phenomenon of emerging indigenous religions is restatement. Having undergone changes through contact with Christianity and Western civilization, they would strive to work for the common good for humanity in general. This means that indigenous religions are not uncritical of their own ways and their intentions to re-Africanise the African or they may be irrelevant for failure to come to terms with current changes embraced by the majority. Therefore, Mthembu (1996:74) is correct to have observed that,

Grassroots theology does not seek simply to repeat the African religion-cultural life of the past. That would be impossible, for African Traditional Religion is itself, like African culture in general, dynamic and evolutionary. Over the years, it has absorbed certain aspects of modern political and social South African life. It is not simply a religion frozen in antiquity. It is an organic phenomenon that is deeply etched in the African psyche.

Although in South Africa more or less the same pattern of the elements of the resurgence of the indigenous religions is perceptible as in Asia, Black theologians would do well firstly to observe that the situation is rather more complex, not only

because of religious pluralism but also of the fact of negotiating indigenous religious pluralism¹⁸. Secondly, it appears that the move by Black theologians towards the re-Africanisation of the African seems to have taken little than less account of the extent of the “destructive impact of colonisation and the positive effects of modernisation” (Nürnberg 1984:46). They have become generally over optimistic in their mood.

On the other hand, some may be disheartened by the fact that “decolonisation did not bring much respite. In some ways, the impact of the legacy of colonial times *is being felt only now* (my own emphasis). This is evidenced by the fact that “the mental, cultural, economic and technological dependence of the Third World countries has become more far-reaching than ever before” (Nürnberg 1984:46). Beside this, re-Africanisation of the African can hardly be done in the isolation of economic self-sufficiency – political emancipation alone is not good enough. Politics is about power and not food, and people will always be likely to follow their stomachs. If political situation in many African countries was anything to go by, political power does not always translate into economic power. In many instances like African countries political power becomes an end in itself.

Thirdly, the resurgence of indigenous religions in South Africa, in spite of this perceived as being geared toward the renewal of the African, may face a new enemy common to both the Christian faith and any other religions on the ground – the emerging of the African secular society. Secularism, whose emergence is glamorised by current media, is working to sideline religious beliefs of whatever nature or anything which is not consistent with the development of the modern trends. Developments of modern trends, however, are more western in their outlook since they are mainly initiated from there. Another challenge is relativism¹⁹ in which truth is mainly regarded as conjectural.

¹⁸ Indigenous religions are not a monolithic block. Even members of the same indigenous religion are not possessed by the same ancestral spirit. Thorpe (1992:29) talks about the presence of “many differences, especially in religious practices, among the myriad groups of these peoples populating the present day countries of central, eastern, western and southern Africa”.

¹⁹ Gehman (2005:148) explain relativism succinctly by saying: “There are no absolutes in truth or morality. Morally, situation ethics rule New Age thinking. What is right is what is best for me. Nothing is right or wrong in and of itself. It may hurt you, but if it please me or feels good to me, then it is right for me”.

1.2 Aims of Research

Following the brief description of the resurgence of indigenous religious trends in South Africa and their impact on the South African religious situation, it can be said without doubt that this poses enormous challenges to the Church. In the context of these developments, the Christian church cannot help but begin to meet these challenges through in-depth self-examination.

However, this is not a simple matter – Christianity is still being faced by questions of relevancy, on the one hand and still has to justify its missionary enterprise in Southern Africa where social oppression has often been blamed on colonialism and Christianity. Christians have always believed, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever” (Heb. 13:8; NIV). If there were Christians still believing this, what would their message to the world be today? More especially what kind of difference would the world notice if the Christian faith were to be out of the picture tomorrow? In other words, are there still conditions that warrant the necessity and the presence of the Church or Christianity?

This study hopes to discover how the Church in mission could discern and fulfil its missionary mandate while creatively engaging elements of emerging indigenous religious trends in South Africa. It will attempt to explore whether elements of indigenous religious trends have it in their capacity to address the South African religious situation. It will argue that in the pursuit of political emancipation and democracy, elements of indigenous religious trends did not regard their spirituality and the spirituality of South Africans with any degree of seriousness and thus are less equipped to deal with the emerging moral degeneration engulfing South Africa. Conversely, South Africans may have won political freedom on the ground but lost the moral war. The study will further argue that elements of indigenous religious trends on their own are less equipped to deal with moral regeneration²⁰.

²⁰ According to Kinoti (in van der Walt 2003:48), “Moral failure is at the heart of the prevailing socio-economic crisis in Africa. We are living in a growing moral vacuum. Africa’s moral capacity has been severely eroded by many forces like colonialism, urbanisation and Western secularism. Selfishness, corruption, dishonesty, embezzlement, laziness etc., are widespread. It applies to both the rich and the poor”

My overarching purpose is to describe, based on missiological reflection and consideration of the biblical material, *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa*. I hope that the present study will help to find out whether elements of emerging indigenous religious trends in South Africa afforded the Church in mission an opportunity to recoil under the glaring failures²¹ of its past, or an alternative opportunity of declaring its faith. I want to explore what more the Church in mission should do which it has not sufficiently done in the past if the protest of emerging indigenous religions against its mission, provided an opportunity for the Church to declare its faith.

This concern occupied the attention of some South Africans who often sought to discern the role of the Church in the changing South Africa (cf. Mosoma 1991; *Concerned Evangelicals* 1986). Many felt that a re-evaluation of the mission of the Church was due (*Kairos Document* 1986). Apparently some South Africans believe that the Church has some role to play in helping rebuild the lives of South Africans (cf. August 2000). However, when talk is made about rebuilding the lives of South Africans, politics always shadow all endeavours. There are unhealthy tendencies which assume that life in South Africa is only about politics and that all South Africans are politicians. This is further compensated by narrow ideology that only politics could better the lives of the masses in South Africa and therefore, political activism is of utmost importance.

This study hopes to prove that the Gospel of Jesus Christ offered and still does, long lasting solutions to most Africa's and South Africa's problems, but that the delivery systems (colonialists, individual believers, churches, missionaries, religious institutions. etc.) were not competent in linking the South African situation with the Christian faith. It hopes to indicate why the Church is failing to account sufficiently to the world in general and to non-Christians in particular what Christ has done for believers. It will argue that ritualism, whether Christian or non-Christian, would not transform the world. It will indicate why the Church should revisit its missionary mandate and explore its

²¹ The Christian church parades a sad history in South Africa on its background. In many ways it has been suggested that today's Christian church is responsible for the present hostile environment. On one hand White sections of the Christian Church have legitimized the *Apartheid* system as a viable way of life and practice (de Gruchy 1979); on the other hand Black sections of the Church have legitimated violence as an incredible instrument of liberation (Tingle 1992). The former White section of the Church has recognized and publicly admitted that it was wrong and that it should have withdrawn itself from policies of forced separation and division of people. However, the latter section of the Church has yet to admit that providing theological justification for revolutionary violence has also been wrong.

dimensions of its missionary mandate, and it will show why the Church should not only be concerned about its destination but about its journey as well.

On the part of emerging indigenous religious trends I will prove that the advent of democracy in South Africa has hardly solved all problems and indicate why the re-Africanisation of the African in the context of the world consciousness is a mammoth task. Moreover, it is my ultimate intention to challenge elements of emerging indigenous religious trends in order that they will reconsider their own role and see if they indeed have it in their power to rebuild South Africa.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

Reasons giving rise for the rationale of this study are multiple and varied. In the next sections, we shall investigate some. To begin with, I am particularly interested in the study of this nature and I am passionate in my desire to research this topic. My own ministry is largely based on indigenous people affected by emerging indigenous religious trends. Thus, the study affords me an ample opportunity of enhancing my knowledge and my skill as I do mission work among indigenous people in South Africa and in Lesotho. Most importantly, I would like to understand how the Church in mission could order its ways and practices in order to bear a positive witness to the indigenous people of South Africa. This indirectly divulges my deep concern for the indigenous people of South Africa. I feel "they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mat. 9:36; NIV). I personally feel that religion, not atheism, is at the heart of everything—but our behaviours are largely informed by our beliefs. Essentially this study does nothing more than addressing its own attitudes and method in regard to elements of emerging indigenous religious trends that have been mentioned.

However, most importantly, the Church in mission should still be engaged in the world in general and with emerging indigenous religions in particular. Its missionary calling has never been suspended. Christ's mandate still stands, "Go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them everything thing that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19; NIV). In this context, the Church needs to justify its missionary enterprise in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends as they impact on it.

We must concede, however, that considerations on the re-evaluation of the Church in mission in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends have been attempted, albeit under various titles. *Local Theologies* (Schreiter 1985), *Elements of emerging ecumenical paradigms* (Bosch 1991), Mthembu's *Elements of Grassroots Theology in the South African Context* (1996), Kritzinger's *Studying Religious Communities as Agents of Change: An agenda for missiology* (1995), Balcomb's *From liberation to democracy: Theologies of bread and being in the new South Africa* (1998) and Martin Ott's *Inculturation – Revisited, New Challenges for the “Local” in the “Global”* are among several works whose concerns are premised on the role of the Church in mission in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends. At the same time it should be borne in mind that both Third World Theologies, Black Theology, African Theology, etc., did attempt to evaluate the Church in mission and its missionary mandate. Generally these studies prove once again that religion is a subject of considerable concern in the modern world, and of particular interest to those of us who were witnessing the birth of the new South Africa..

However, most of the works we have cited are largely motivated by the need to make Christianity relevant to the post-colonial era, especially in seeking to promote the situation of religious pluralism in South Africa and forge conditions of mutual understanding among various faiths. They are trying to heed Sprunger's (1973) warning to the effect that there would be no relevant theology in Southern Africa and in Africa as long as the Universal Church and the Mission Churches do not start considering, listening to, and learning from our separatist brothers.

The basic assumption is that if Christianity would be relevant to Africans it must be “Africanised,” since our “separatist brothers,” or African Independent Churches (AIC) have already proven their loyalty to former African belief systems. The problem remains the manner, the degree to which and a model in which Christianity would be Africanised if ever it might be.

Perhaps Martin Ott (1998:100) is correct to be of the view that the golden years of inculturation are over, as far as the dialogue between faith and a local culture is concerned. But both Kritzinger and Mthembu underscore Sprunger's (1973) warning that elements of indigenous religious trends must be studied if Christianity would be relevant in South Africa. Kritzinger (1995:377), for instance, contends that, “Somebody

who wants to make a difference to contemporary South Africa simply has to be aware of the issues involved in religious pluralism, intercultural communication, political liberation and the growth of African Initiated Churches”.

In the same vein, Mthembu (1996) concurred by saying, “For Christianity to be relevant in post-apartheid society, it must examine the past, the present and the future of South Africa”. For many of studies of this nature, concepts such as interfaith encounter, inter-religious dialogue and mutual cooperation (cf. Lochhead 1988) among people of various faiths for the betterment of human life, will be attractive. The difficulty with the concepts promoted by studies of this nature is when mutual cooperation or inter-religious dialogue becomes an end in itself.

One of the imperative reasons giving rise to this study is the apparent growing uncertainty and confusion among the Christians. For instance, “many professing Christians rely on ATR in times of crisis” (Gehman 2005:12), and that Africans rely on ATR not only in times of crisis but also when “seeking to re-assert their own traditional culture, including their religion” (Gehman 2005:14). Formerly, this would have been contradictory in terms because indigenous people were converted from ATR when they became Christians. However, this indicates, once more, the new situation which is emerging and is dawning also upon South Africans. Therefore, the call by Martins Ott (1998) to suspend inculturation is premature, but he was right. In order to be relevant, does Christianity needs to be Africanised, Europeanised, Americanised, Asianised, etc., and still be called Christianity? Moreover, in Africa, extra care should be exercised in that, the Africanisation of Christianity should not necessarily be equated with the ‘animisation’ of Christianity where ancestral spirits are evoked.

In the light of these, there should be concerns for the need to evaluate the Church in mission in the wake of indigenous religious trends in an ongoing process in South Africa. We already have indicated that this is imperative in the light of various evolved and sustained perceptions putting the Christian Church in a negative light especially since the dawning of the post-colonial era. Perhaps a brief survey of some of these perceptions will help to put the whole rationale of this study into focus.

Often claims have been made that “When Christianity came to South Africa with Europeans, primarily in the nineteenth century, indigenous social institutions were

either destroyed, suppressed or modified...African societies and their traditional institutions became to some degree Christianized, colonized and westernized" (Mthembu 1996:14). This means that the Church has been part and parcel of destroying "traditional institutions" either directly or indirectly. Generally, the Church does not or should not have a good standing in the eyes of indigenous people.

Further accusations are made, for instance, "When the first missionaries came, they neglected and despised our cultures. We had to abandon our own culture. But now as we have matured in our Christian faith we take the responsibility for our own shape of Christianity. By valorising our local cultures and integrating them into our Christian faith, we correct the mistakes of the missionaries and re-establish self-esteem and pride in our culture" (Ott 1998:91). By "integrating" some elements of local cultures implies that syncretism is welcome as part of the manifestation of a present form of African Christianity.

In addition to these, "There is unanimous agreement among Black Theologians that White Christian missionaries played a major role in undermining the culture of Black people in South Africa. They use expressions such as "suppression", "erosion", "impoverishment" and "betrayal" to describe this negative effect of Christian mission on African culture" (Kritzinger 1989:90). To some extent, the Church is regarded as a "racist institution" (1989:108), a "colonial institution" (1980:116), and on the other hand linked to racist oppression (1989:98), "capitalist exploitation" (1980:120). These assertions and similar others make studies of this nature more imperative, especially a study on the nature of the Church needs to be revisited.

Perhaps the current concern, precipitating the study of this nature, is the one expressed by Kruger (in Kritzinger 1995:16) when he said, "Non-Christians had (and still have) the dubious privilege of having their taxes funnelled into faculties and departments aimed at converting them from their own religion. This sounds like a sick joke. It is, to put bluntly, a monopolistic and discriminatory arrangement". Kritzinger (:16) believes it was a statement directed at faculties of theology in South Africa, but perhaps primarily at the department of missiology, due to the common perception that missiologists are Christian theologians whose primary concern it is to "convert" other people to Christianity and who are teaching students to do the same. He says that missiology is thus viewed as being concerned with Christian propaganda and therefore intents on the

displacement or destruction of other religions. For this reason missiology is often seen as one of the most unacceptable features of theology, a discipline which should disappear now that religious pluralism is enshrined in the South African constitution and the Faculty of Theology at Unisa (University of South Africa) has changed its name to Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies.

The Church cannot regard these perceptions and many others to be inconsequential or easily dismissed as trivial or be left to die a natural death, and the fact that they remain constant, calls for a greater response on the part of the Church in mission.

However, to put the relevance of this study into perspective, it will also prove more informative if we were to couple what we just have said with another issue more on the level of African culture²². In commenting about the decimation of African cultures Prozesky (in Worlfaard 1993:164) sends some signals that evangelism in South Africa was more a political issue than a religious one. He says:

“What differentiates the country’s (South Africa) religious identity from the global pattern is of course the great preponderance of Christians and the support a majority of white Christians have given to the grossly exploitative political economy of the country. Conversely, it is important for Christians to remember that in the experience of black people, the gospel arrived here in tandem with deeply destructive political and commercial forces which have succeeded in making two of South Africa’s indigenous faiths, those of the Khoikhoi and the San, extinct within our borders, have destroyed all the once-independent politics of the pre-European period and massively exploited all their survivors, and have extensively eroded the ancestral faith of the Bantu-speaking peoples”.

While this statement is similar to the ones mentioned above, it adds a political dimension to the South African religious situation. Politics and Christianity have come to characterise the South African religious patterns through “the support a majority of white Christians have given to the grossly exploitative political economy of the country.”

Prozesky mentions, *inter alia*, the disappearance of “two of South Africa’s indigenous faiths, those of the Khoikhoi and the San, extinct within our borders, and the

²² Missiologist Louis Luzbetak (1970:14) defines culture as “...a way of life; culture is the total plan for living; it is functionally organized into a system; it is acquired through learning; it is a way of life of social group, not of an individual as such”.

“extensive” erosion of “ancestral faith of the Bantu-speaking people” within the borders of South Africa as a point in history. Prozesky’s emphasis, as far as Christianity is concerned, is on the centrifugal aspect of mission. We believe that assertions of this nature could be substantiated by consideration of the role played by the centripetal nature of mission. For instance, how indigenous people reacted when they were exposed to the benefits of Western education, medicine, and the Christian faith. This needs to be considered as well.

Similar claims have been made and fairly covered and corroborated in many studies. For instance, we have just alluded to the fact that South African Black Theologians unanimously agree that, “White Christian missionaries played a major role in undermining the culture of Black people in South Africa” (Kritzinger 1989:90). But it is also a matter of serious concern that Christianity in South Africa, being characterised by the political situation, has been reduced to a matter of colour. Christianity is often associated with White and ancestral religions with Black. Again studies of this nature should dispel these kinds of myths.

But there is yet another factor precipitating the need to evaluate the Church in mission — elements of emerging indigenous religious trends have taken a more active role in criticising the Christian faith in South Africa. While this should be welcome, bringing the Church face to face with some of its weaknesses, so that the Church should be awakened to some of its blunders and struggle to amend them, unfortunately the Christian faith is being depreciated in the process. The Church’s mission is generally regarded as an “ideological tool for the softening up of Black people” (Mosala & Tlhagale 1996a:vii).

Moreover, “traditional pressures” are exerted constantly, among other things, by state media such as radio and television and regular national festivals across the country especially Heritage Day. For instance, Radio Talk Shows such as *Lenaka la Motheo* in *Lesedi FM* (SABC²³. Sotho Broadcasting Service) and *Re Suga Thari* in *Motsweding FM* (SABC. Tswana Broadcasting Service) are committed to re-introduce to young and re-educate older Africans about their traditional ways of living respectively called *Mekhoa ea Basotho* (Sotho culture) and *Ngwao tsa Batswana* (Tswana culture). Some

²³ South African Broadcasting Cooperation.

African experts²⁴ are often invited to make presentations on the Shows during which interested listeners are invited to make comments or ask questions. Telephone lines are often congested because of huge interest in learning more about African traditional ways of life. Central to the African ways of life, however, is a return to the ancestral religions of the forefathers. Unfortunately the rest of the content of what is described as African traditional ways of life is simply devoted to comparing what is worse in Western cultures at present with what had been the best in African traditional customs²⁵.

On the other hand, SABC Television programmes such as *Lentswe la Batho*, Sotho/Tswana/Sepedi on TV 2; *Ipfi la Vhatu/Rito ra Vanhu* Venda/Tsonga on TV 3 and *Izwi labantu* Zulu/Xhosa/Ndebele and Swati on TV 1 are also dedicated to inform Africans about their ancestral religion and their traditional ways of life. South Africans observe Heritage Day annually. During the celebrations of this day, the tone is one of reliving the traditional Africa²⁶. While there is nothing wrong about all these, it is generally suggested that the aim is to “correct the mistakes of the missionaries and re-establish self-esteem and pride in our culture” (Ott 1998:91).

The impact that these programmes and activities have upon the Christian Church, especially among indigenous Africans, is reflected by consistent encouragement of the practice of African Traditional Religion in their churches. The worship of ancestral spirits has become prevalent in some African churches (cf. Setiloane 2000).

We can go on mentioning issues of this nature almost indefinitely. But we have selected these few to draw attention to the need for the Church to evaluate its mission in the

²⁴ Perhaps at the forefront in this regard is the *Kara Heritage Institute* whose aims include becoming an internationally recognised African Heritage Institute for transformation on African Heritage and whose mission is to collect, process, interpret, disseminate, coordinate and communicate of the African Heritage. The Institute focuses on cultural, socio-economic and developmental issues (www.kara.co.za).

²⁵ However, it should also be noted that SABC/TV African programmes are also critical of the ways Africans have come to behave themselves. Through these programmes, Africans themselves are being criticised as being “eurocentric” in their worldview, because of education and Western culture. They are accused of rejecting their cultural values, customs and traditional spiritual life. Dependence on western medicine to the exclusion of the traditional African ones is discouraged. But more seriously, “Eurocentric Christianity” has nothing of value for the Africans since it continues to have negative impact psychologically on the “self-esteem of Black South African Christians as they are confronted with the false claims that their blackness represents depravity or simple heathenism” (Mthembu 1996:66)

²⁶ Often, people are encouraged to wear traditional clothes, sing traditional songs. The aim is to promote self-reliance, self-esteem and protect African traditions and customs and to nurture African communalism as part of the heritage to be bequeathed to the young African generation.

context of emerging indigenous religious trends. The Church has a crucial task in the world. It has been charged with a mandate to mediate the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth. The Kingdom of God cannot be equated to human cultures no matter how noble they may be. If that was the case, there would be no God's mission. This study has been conceived in the light of these issues.

1.4 Background of the Study

1.4.1 Theological Background of the Study

My theological reflection is self-consciously Wesleyan of which a bare outline thereof may be sketched. I hold the view

- that Christian theology is a systematic presentation of the Christian faith. This implies that I adopt a particular way of approaching the Bible and theology;
- that Scripture (the Bible) is a documentary record of God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. The Bible is the divine rule of faith and practice and the only authoritative and the primary source of Christian theology. Theology is the systematic reflection of that revelation. This understanding of both Scripture and theology is dynamic and life shaping rather than static and propositional;
- that as a Wesleyan theology it is also interested in moving on in Christian faith. Often Wesleyan theology is characterized as too optimistic about the possibility of complete Christian maturity experienced in this life;
- that human beings are born in sin and cannot save themselves from their sins, and consequently sin does not only restrain moral evolution on the part of mankind but also exposes them to the wrath of God presently manifest, as described in Rom. 1:18-32;
- that salvation consists of all what God has done for mankind through Jesus Christ and it is a free gift to all and is appropriated through personal faith in Jesus Christ, and that to this the Holy Spirit bears witness

- that faith entails unconditionally believing the Scriptural records of what God has done for mankind through Jesus Christ, and is evidenced by personal life and witness to the grace of God's work for me and in me.
- that personal witness entails being engaged in the Great Commission bearing witness to the Grace of God to mankind

In similar manner it is a common course in Wesleyan theology to regard faith not merely as an intellectual affirmation or a gift of God to the elect, but a new way of life, the enthroning of a new Master. Faith then is not the cause of salvation but the condition of receiving it. It holds that faith does not save us, but we are saved only by Christ in whom we have faith. Consequently, faith has an ethical meaning. It means a realignment of the life to please God. Faith in God is tremendously important because sin began at the point where faith in Him broke down.

1.4.2 Missiological Background of the Study

1.4.2.1 Nature of Missiology and its Scope

Missiology, in the simplest terms, is our human attempt to think clearly and correctly about God's mission through the body of Christ called the Church. It is the study of ways in which the transformed Church organizes and communicates God's message.

That missiology has often seemed abstract and unimportant in our day is more the fault of missiologists than of the subject itself. The importance of mission can hardly be overstated. To the transformed Christian Church, mission is not optional. It is every Christian's business. To this Stephen Neil (1964:23-4) bears witness and he writes,

“The Church of the first Christian generation was a genuine missionary Church...What is clear is that every Christian was a witness. Where there were Christians, there would be a living burning faith, and before long an expanding Christian community”.

It goes without saying that the modern church needs to recapture this spirit. To recapture this spirit the Church needs be transformed. Mission is the never-ending task

of the transformed Church to transform the world through the message of Christ. The essence of the message of Christ is that we may be delivered from all sin to a new life in Christ. By the grace of God we Christians are to “put off the old self” – the old patterns of conduct as well as the old carnal mind – and are to “put on the new self” – a new and holy way of life as well as “the mind of Christ” (Eph. 4:17-24). This means that, if mission is to fulfil its proper function, it must no longer be thought of as the monopoly of the experts (Nysewander 2005), but the mobilisation of the transformed Christians.

1.4.2.2 Missiological Background of the Study

The missiological background of this study has been immensely influenced by what has become to be called the *kerygmatic model of mission* (Bosch 1992). The model was developed by the Department of Missiology in the University of South Africa. Space does not permit a broader consideration of this model at this point; however, certain fundamental principles of this model may be briefly noted for the purposes of this study. They may be outlined as follows: the centrality of proclamation, mission methods and motives and goals.

A. *The Centrality of Proclamation*

This model is called “*kerygmatic*” to “emphasise the fact that the churches or mission agencies who subscribe to this model place a very heavy emphasis on preaching, on the verbal communication of the gospel” (Bosch 1992:19).

The Biblical God has revealed Himself in salvific terms. He revealed Himself not only as the God-Creator of the world but also and primarily as the Saviour of the world (Senior & Stuhlmüller 1983). It is the biblical concept that “God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe” (Hebrews 1:1-2; NIV). To this end, David Bosch (1992:16) adds, “First God spoke through the prophets, instructing them to convey his message to his people either by speech or by writing or both.”

Next, and supremely, he spoke through his Son, his ‘Word...made flesh’, and his Word’s words, whether spoken directly or through his apostles. Thirdly, he speaks

through his Spirit...and it is God's speech which makes our speech necessary. We must speak what he has spoken. Hence the paramount of obligation to preach". Proclamation, therefore, as Bosch (1992) believes, is intrinsic to the Christian faith.

In view of these considerations, we suggest that the Early Church did not create the tradition about Jesus; she simply and faithfully expounded it for her generation. She did this to meet the needs of those who paused long enough to listen to hear the message and join her ranks.

B. *The Mission Methods*

Echelons of the proclamation of the word have characterised mission methods of the *kerygmatic model*. This is because the *kerygmatic model of mission* recognises the expansion of the Kingdom of God firstly through the agency of the individual, and secondly through the agency of local the church, a Church in mission.

Therefore, the base of the proclamation pyramid is the consecrated, activated individual. To this end, ordination is primarily the ordination for preaching the Word. Although the emphasis is "on ordained missionaries" (Bosch 1992), as far as the preaching of the word is concerned, lay involvement in preaching is highly recognised. From the ministry of the laity emerged evangelists who were commonly employed to evangelise or to preach the gospel to non-Christians.

Not only does the *kerygmatic model of mission* recognise proclamation through the agency of the individual, but also through the agency of the local church. The local church is primarily the church in mission. The local church represents more than just the aggregate of each individual witness. This is especially true when coming to embark on certain evangelism projects which individuals could play an important role only in a collective manner.

C. *Motives and Goals*

The major aim of the *kerygmatic model of mission* is salvation from sin and modelling life under the Kingdom of God. Central to this approach therefore, is the doctrine of *harmatology*, which is the doctrine of sin, and *soteriology*, which is the doctrine of salvation. We maintain that the intrusion of sin in the world (Rom. 5:12) is fundamental to human problems. We also maintain a holistic approach to salvation succinctly

expressed in I Thes. 5:23, "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it". We concede, however, that early development of the doctrine of salvation laid more emphasis on the salvation of the soul from eternal damnation to the neglect of the body. As Bosch (1992:45) points out, "Much of this was determined by ancient Greek thinking, which tended to make a sharp distinction between body and soul, the temporal and the eternal, this world and the next, the profane and the sacred, and so forth". However, Christianity captured the Greek thinking, transformed it and used it to describe the gospel of Christ. While this emphasis begs a vertical approach, it is Klaus Nürnberger (1999:338) who succinctly drew a neat picture of the horizontal approach to salvation. Salvation "is the comprehensive well-being of all people in the context of the comprehensive well-being of their entire social and natural environment".

1.5 Research Methodology

1.5.1 Reflection on Research Methodology

A survey of research methods with the intention of making a choice of the method of inquiry suitable for our study, engendered a feeling of hesitancy to apply distinguished patterns of sociological schemes, using sample groups, questionnaires, and established academic terminology, sometimes supplemented by participant observation. I follow Hans Jürgen Becken (1993) in protesting against this approach for its inadequacy in spite of the fact that it results in good-looking statistics and data, which serve as raw material for learned conclusions and interpretation. However, this established academic approach is no longer sufficient to support the Christian church in the present task to build bridges of mutual understanding between the different groups of South African society.

1.5.2 Gathering of Materials

To explicate the topic of this study, *The Church in Mission in the Wake of Emerging Indigenous Religious Trends in South Africa*, this study will be primarily based on

written sources concerning the subject under consideration. These will be selected for study and critical evaluation. Insights gained therein will become part of this study. However, the insight gained therein will be the result of the degree of my personal involvement with the data through the process of evaluation.

My purpose is to discover how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its practices to give positive witness to indigenous people of South Africa. Consequently much information will be gathered from the huge amount that has been written on the subject from a number of different perspectives, including my own.

Although the indigenous people of South Africa are the major focus of this study, other people of Africa and elsewhere will be considered whenever it is necessary to elucidate our position.

1.5.3 Contextual Background of the Study

Current developments in Africa in general and South Africa in particular, form the basic frame of reference for this study. These developments are often summarised as follows:

- Geoffrey Wainwright (2000:85) read an article by David Barret who, in 1970, had predicted that by the year 2000, “the Christian population of Africa would amount to 350 million”; and in 1998 the *Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of the Year* had given the figure for mid 1997 as 350 892 000. Some observers then reckoned Africa, or rather sub-Saharan Africa, to be ‘a Christian continent’; or would at least be on the verge of becoming such. The whole concept expressed above means that Africa is perceived to be on the move. It is transforming. Central to this transformation is Christianity or the Christian faith.
- The extensive spread of Christianity in Africa drew the attention of some Black theologians. They “operated from the assumption that Christianity was massive and widespread among black people...Thus they recognised that Christianity was a ‘haven’ for many black people” (Maluleke 1998:329).

- Despite all this, Africa has its own problems. For instance, Rwandese genocide in 1994 and an ongoing tension in African countries are still matters to reckon with. Time will not allow us to embark on an extensive investigation of Africa's problems and successes.
- Like Africa, the situation in South Africa is one of mixed fortunes:

“South Africa is currently in a period of rapid social change and transition, and in dire need of stable and reliable agents to facilitate the democratic transformation. Rising unemployment, poverty, violence, an overwhelming crime-rate, corruption (bureaucratic and private) and a lack of moral fibre characterise the socio-economic and political context” (August 2000:50).

also

We now live in a constitutional democracy with a new president, Rolihlahla Mandela. For many South Africans this is an exciting development, a dream come true. Despite all this there is still, however, the ongoing suffering of Black people. Poverty has deepened for the majority of Black South Africans, crime is rife, and violent killing of many innocent people is the order of the day. Children and women continue to be sexually abused. Every twenty-seven minutes a woman is raped in our cities. Yes, we achieved our political freedom, but we have a long way to go to achieving our economic freedom. This is a new context out of which we need to talk about the essence of the Christian faith (Goba 1998:24)

Within these contexts, the church is still regarded as a central institution, which concerns itself largely with issues of poverty, the marginalized, the homeless and the unemployed. However, the Church has developed credibility problems in that some sections of the society regard it as part of the problem²⁷ while others consider it as a solution to the problems of South Africa²⁸. This creates ambivalence in the mission of

²⁷ A majority of Black theologians regard the Church as “a racist institution,” “a colonial institution,” (Kritzinger 1989). Maluleke (1998:335) maintains that Christianity contributed more to the problems Africa is facing. Commenting about the Rwandese genocide and the South African situation, he argues, “These situations must force us to think introspectively and honestly about the possible culpability of Christianity and Christian churches in some of the crises that Africa is facing”. The “culpability of Christianity and Christian churches,” arise largely from the fact that Black theologians “reckoned that the Christian faith should ‘be shaped into a formidable weapon in the hands of the oppressed instead of just leaving it to confuse, frustrate or even destroy our people’ (Mofokeng in Maluleke 1998:329-330). In view of this statement in the light of Rwandese genocide Maluleke (1998) calls “All religious people, Christians in particular, need to ‘search their souls’ about the possible linkages between their faiths and the problems on the content”.

²⁸ There is no other area so critical than to describe the role of the Church in either Africa or South Africa. In describing the role, responsibility or the task of the Church (Theron 1992; de Villiers 2000) it is not clear which Church is implied, since it seems we are about to talk about *Christian pluralism* (for instance,

the Church. The critical questions surrounding the mission of the Church thus include the following: how will the Church go about addressing questions of poverty, marginalisation, homelessness and unemployment, etc., without playing into the hands of current power structures. These are some of the difficulties, which will be encountered in an attempt to explain the role of the Church in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends.

- Some statements of the elements of emerging indigenous religious trends about the Church also form the frame of reference for this study. Their contribution to the shape of the mission of the Church will be critical for this study. Generally, the issue in regard to elements of emerging indigenous religious trends is the Africanisation of Christianity²⁹. Thus the essence of our investigation consists of identifying, surveying, evaluating and discussing some elements of these trends to discern their impact on the South African situation, which would lead the Church in mission to formulate a response on how to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa.

1.5.4 Divisions of the Study

The overriding goal of this study is to describe, on the basis of missiological reflection and consideration of the biblical material, how *the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religions, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa*. In an attempt to achieve this, the study is outlined in the following order:

Maluleke 1998:331 talks about "African Christianities"). It is also important that the Church in African and South Africa does not live a distinct life being unaffected by developments in the continent. Thus, Balcomb (1998:61) is vigilant to ask, "Where is the church in all of this? What is its role as South Africa approaches the 21st century? The church, simply stated, is to be found throughout the social spectrum...It has been found, moreover, not as a distinct 'alternative community' within the social sectors in which it finds itself...Usually, though not always, the church simply reflected the norms and values of that particular sector". Generally, when mention is made about the role, responsibility or the task of the Church latent belief is expressed about the capacity of the Church to bring about positive changes.

²⁹ It is not certain what is meant by the often-quoted phrase, "Africanisation of Christianity" since it is impossible for individual Christians to be "Africanised" given the fact that Christianity is found in individual persons of all races in Africa and South Africa, whether Chinese, Pakistani, White South Africans, European South African, etc, the Africanisation of Christianity in all other races could be of self-defeating exercise.

CHAPTER 1, *Introduction*, describes the research problem, outlines the aims and objectives and the rationale of this study, draws attention to its theological and missiological backgrounds, sets limits and describes the background and outline of this study.

CHAPTER 2, *Definition of Concepts*. This chapter attempts to operationalise major concepts forming the theme of this study.

CHAPTER 3, the *Church in Mission and its Missionary Mandate to the World*, briefly surveys the nature and character of the Christian Church. It will describe the missionary mandate of the Church in terms of its universality, origin, content, scope and argue that the Church has an unalienable and comprehensive and all-inclusive missionary mandate to the world. It lays the foundation from which to discover *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa*. Central to this chapter is the universality of God's love, its missionary and spiritual implication and the universality of God's atonement.

CHAPTER 4, the *Church in Mission: Dimensions of its Missionary Mandate*, continues to build on the foundation laid in Chapter 3. It draws attention to some important dimensions of the missionary mandate of the Church, and these comprise social, evangelical, and political, cultural and economic dimensions of the mandate. The overall purpose is *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa*, in terms of social, evangelical, political, cultural and economic dimensions of the mandate

CHAPTER 5, *The Church in Mission: Indigenous People of South Africa*, endeavours to characterise the indigenous people of South Africa, especially with reference to their social, religious, political, cultural and economic life. It will further characterise indigenous people in the context of the modern world. The major presupposition of this chapter is that the main objective of the mission of pioneer missionaries in South Africa had not been primarily to evangelise, but to civilise; and therefore, preaching the Gospel was merely an accessory to the civilisation of the African.

CHAPTER 6, the *Church in Mission: Elements of Emerging Indigenous Religious Trends*, selects and discusses only those elements or driving forces of emerging indigenous religious trends which attempt to reformulate the Bible, as well as the theology in some categories peculiar to African thoughts, and in a manner relevant to the African context in general, and South Africa in particular. It argues that as much as these elements are versatile in proving their loyalty to contextualization, yet they had only partial success largely because contextual analysis does not go deep enough to consider critical existential principles raised by the doctrine of hammatology, which I believe would have been enriched by the same. On the other hand, contextual analysis self-confessedly loses sight of the whole purpose of God as revealed in the Scriptures which, in our view, is the main cause of its partial success. In view of these, it will be argued that humanity needs a Saviour and the Saviour has come in the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

CHAPTER 7, the *Church in Mission: Its Missionary Imperative* critically evaluates issues raised in the preceding chapters and argues that God, through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, already has done enough for his people to realise the salvation he has given them to live joyfully in peace and in love in the world he created for them. All the Church needs to do is to lead the way through social involvement obeying and appropriating the principles of the life that God had given his people. It further points out that God's purpose will be fulfilled in spite of modern development which attempts to discount the concept of God.

CHAPTER 8, the *Church in Mission: Conclusion and Implications* attempts to review this study in terms of the contribution it purports to make to the Christian faith, and in particular to the Church in Mission and its missionary mandate.

1.6 Delimitation of Study

My research deals only with the issue of emerging indigenous religious trends in South Africa. It does not deal with other forms of African Traditional Religions. Nor will an attempt be made to discuss the merits and demerits of mission during colonialism; about the deeds and misdeeds of missionaries. In short, this is not an introduction to missiology. Therefore, this study does not desire to be a treatise about the power of

colonial conquest on developing countries. Where indeed real factors from these studies are desired, an indication will be made. However, I have rather limited myself to some questions regarding emerging indigenous religious trends in South Africa. These are discussed in the context of the Church in mission. No attempt will be made to describe similar emerging indigenous religious trends outside South Africa except for the purposes of example and clarity.

I have deliberately avoided discussing modernity, new age religions and post-modern and driving forces behind these trends although they have enormous influence in the trend South Africa is taking. In my opinion discussing these issues in detail have the potential to divert attention from the issues of this study. However, reference may be made to these trends only if necessary to highlight a point. Mention should also be made that this is not an attempt at a theology of religions where efforts are made to stimulate a meaningful inter-religious dialogue. This is largely a pastoral reflection on emerging indigenous religions and their impact on the Church.

The design of this study deserves further attention. This study is normative, analytical, comparative and descriptive, with a basis for an evaluative model that could serve to help the Church in mission give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa. This study is normative in that it tries to grapple with those concepts that underlie the foundation of mission. However, the analytic task we are proposing to undertake is particularly difficult because of the broad constellation of theories that comprise the tradition and because of the paucity of analytical material on this topic.

However, I have often been aware that being a Christian myself, my subjective feelings about indigenous religions could cloud reasonable perspectives and give less objectivity to the subject. In an attempt to put a limit on this, I have tried to stay as objective as I can. Nevertheless, I cannot rid myself of all subjectivity. Along the way, the reader will come across subjective inclinations, which characterise this study in more or less detail. I am, therefore, personally responsible for everything said and written in this study.

1.7 Summary

We have explored the research problem that motivated the research of this topic; outlining the aims and objectives and the rationale of this study; drawing attention to its theological and missiological backgrounds, setting limits and describing the background and the outline of this study. We will be picking up most of the concerns raised in the research problem as we attempt to develop our understanding summed up in the theme, *The Church in Mission in the Wake of Emerging Indigenous Religious Trends* in subsequent chapters. But first we need to operationalise some major concepts forming the topic of this study.

CHAPTER 2

Definition of Concepts

2.1 Definition of Concepts

The concepts outlined in the topic of this study need further clarification without delving too deeply into the merits and demerits of each of them. They are expressed rhetorically in the topic of this study, *The Church in Mission in the Wake of Emerging Indigenous Religious Trends*.

My choice of this topic seeks to respond to the question as to, *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa*.

2.1.1 The Church

The Church – I concur with Koegelenberg (in August 2000) that the concept of the “church” is an ambiguous one. In South Africa, for instance, one could talk about different churches, some of which are non-Christian. One could talk about Baha’i Church, Islam, and Hindu and/or about Rastafarian Churches, etc. without necessarily implying the Christian Church.

It is even necessary to point out that one may not always refer to the same thing when talking about the Church in South Africa, even if the Christian Church is implied. Different Christian Churches are often distinguished in South Africa. We already know about African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs), or “Settler Church,” the “Afrikaner Church,” the “Black Church” and the “White Church” (de Gruchy 1979). One often also reads about the Conservative Church (*Concerned Evangelicals* 1986). There are many similar descriptions of the church like these without implying a Christian Church.

Therefore, the concept of the “church” as contemplated in this study “refers to a community of people who share a common faith, tradition and commitment. As a

community of ordinary people it is characterised by mutual love, service and solidarity – with all the imperfections of humankind. As a community of people it consists not only of individual members, but different levels of organisation – local, regional, national and even international” (Koeegenberg in August 2000:61). Nevertheless, the “Church” is not an ordinary community; God constitutes it.

In this study the “Church” will also be considered as the Church of Jesus Christ except where otherwise indicated. We believe that the Church of Jesus Christ consists of all people of all ages who have accepted Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the Messiah, and as God Incarnate, and have believed in him that he is their Saviour.

According to August (2000:62), the Church “is the people called from diverse sorts of bondage to freedom, called to a sense of identity founded on a common bond with the God of righteousness and compassion, and called to the twin vocations of worship (communion with God) and participation in the creative, redemptive purpose that unifies all history and is directed to the restoration of the whole creation within a universal order of SHALOM (the *eschatological* community” (emphasis not mine.).

The “sorts of bondage” contemplated here from which the Church is called to freedom include not only sin but also its consequences such as cultural bondage, racism, tribalism, ethnicity, prejudices, discrimination, etc. While recognising these and others, the Church is called to transcend the limitations imposed by these “sorts of bondage” by the power of the Holy Spirit to form an eschatological community guided by principles of freedom.

As far as the nature of the Christian Church is concerned, chapter 3 will attempt to explore it. However, a few observations at this stage may be of value in making more evident the exact nature of the Christian Church. In studying the Greek word for the Church, *ἐκκλησία* and its simplest connotations Wiley (1946), suggests that the word means “an assembly or body of the called out ones” (1946:366). It expresses “the calling of people out from the broader community and together within the broader community of the inhabited world to become the community of God – for God’s redemptive purpose with the world” (August 2000:62).

However, it is contended that the word may also be “used in secular contexts, as is shown by the story of the riot against Paul at Ephesus in Acts 19:32 and 39” (Kung 1968:82). It is also evident that early Christians adapted the word and applied it to their own congregation. Thus “by taking over the term *ecclesia*, the early Christian community made its claim to be the true congregation of God, the true community of God, the true eschatological people of God” (Kung 1968:83).

But it is still Wiley (1946) whom we regard to have brought us closer to the nature of the Christian Church as, “The assembly of called out ones, made up of the divinely adopted sons of God. Christ is its glorious Head. From Him it receives its life through the indwelling Spirit” (1946:366).

It is evident that the foregoing definitions did not take into account the need to define the Church in terms of its main trends (Dulles 1974). Dulles (1974) has mainly defined the Church in terms of its functions rather than its nature. Therefore, the Church is regarded variously as the body of Christ, as an institution, as mystical communion, as sacrament, as Herald, as servant and as eschatology, etc. Dulles (1974) identifies these as models of the church rather than its aspects or dimensions (1974:9).

Consequently, he uses these models to describe the Church since “we cannot fully objectify the Church because we are involved in it; we know it through a kind of intersubjectivity” (1974:17). While we would go along with this, we also maintain a provisional definition of the Christian Church as the community of the called ones.

2.12 The Church in Mission

Pertaining to the concept, *The Church in Mission* - I should rather concur with Bosch's (1991) statement that the *Church in Mission* “is primarily the local church everywhere in the world”. The local church is the very agent of mission, and “God's missionary people” (van Engen 1991).

The local fellowship is the centre of mission (Jacobs 1983). Sometimes the local fellowship may mandate mission boards to plan for and give leadership to forms of mission, which a particular local fellowship cannot do by itself. However, where this

happens the local fellowship forgets about its missionary calling and continues independently unconcerned about the mission board activities.

That the local fellowship is the agent and the centre of mission is fundamental to the New Testament. Bosch (1991) also reveals how this view was “ignored during much of Christian history” (1991:378). The resultant state was scandalous. “Churches and mission agencies in the West understood themselves as churches *for* others” (1991:379; emphasis not mine.), and mission became a one-way traffic – missionaries could only be sent from the West to the rest of the world.

To that extent, modern missionaries were blatantly different from Paul (Allen in Bosch 1991:379). However, a shift from this view was made and “mission could no longer be viewed as one-way traffic, from the West to the Third World; every church everywhere, was understood to be in a state of mission” (1991:379).

The Commission on World Mission held in Bangkok says that “it is at the local level that the reality of the Church universal must be lived” (Documents on Mission 1985:72). The Church of the Nazarene also recognises the fact that “It is in the local church that the saving, perfecting, teaching and commissioning takes place” (*Manual* 2005-2006:62). This implies that mission is born in the local church and sustained in it.

Mission on the other hand cannot be separated from the Church as was previously the case in both Protestantism and Catholicism (Bosch 1991). The Church is *missional* in essence. It has been sent to the world. It exists in a state of being sent. This does not mean that the church and mission are synonymous; but that the one cannot exist without the other. Mission without the church is merely social activism (cf. van Engen 1991). More will be said on this in Chapter 3 when we will be discussing the Church in mission and its missionary mandate to the world.

Generally mission has been interpreted as a “God-given call to appreciate and share one’s religious experience and insights, first within one’s own community and tradition, and then with people and communities of other cultural, social and religious traditions” (Senior & Stuhlmueeller 1983:3). Nevertheless, this interpretation seems to be a later development. Previously, mission meant, amongst other things, “the sending of missionaries to a designated territory”; “the activities undertaken by such missionaries”;

'the geographical area where the missionaries were active'; "the agency which despatched the missionaries"; "the non-Christian world or 'mission field"; "a local congregation without a resident minister and still dependent on the support of an older, established church", or, "a series of special services intended to deepen or spread the Christian faith" (Bosch 1991:1)

Sad to say, though, the concept of the *Church in Mission* being a local church is still in its embryonic stage. It is only in the beginning. In practice, "donor syndrome is still very much in evidence in the affluent churches of the West and a dependency syndrome in the churches of the Third World" (Bosch 1991:380-81). However, the fundamental change in favour of the local church, everywhere, as the agent of mission both in its own environment and further afield, could not be gainsaid and constituted a decisive advance over positions that were vague for many centuries (Bosch 1991:381).

2.1.3 Indigenous Religions

Indigenous religions are pervasively those associated with the veneration of ancestor spirits (Gehman 1989). They typically described as animism or African Traditional Religions (ATR). According to Hammond-Tooke (1994), they are generally known in different languages as *badimo* (*Sesotho Setswana, Sepedi*); *amadlozi* (*Zulu, Siswati, Isindebele*); *swikwembu* (*Tsonga, Shangaan*); *izinyanya* (*Xhosa*); *midzimu* (*Venda*), etc. They have no founders, which makes it difficult to trace their history. They are thus pre-historic in their character.

They have trustees in the form of the forefathers whose spirits are venerated. These are religions considered characteristic of Southern Africa, south of the Sahara desert. It is generally taken for granted that they grew up in the indigenous soil many years before coming into contact with Western civilisation and Christian faith through Christian missionaries under colonial expansion.

Though events marking these religions are now broadcast and televised in the national media, in our investigation we shall select few cases to help shed light on their nature and how they impact the society. For this reason we shall abstain from going into detail lest we pre-empt chapter 5 which is reserved, *inter alia*, for the discussion of indigenous people and indigenous religions.

2.1.4 Emerging Indigenous Religious Trends

I modified Bosch's (1991) title, "Elements of an Emerging Ecumenical Missionary Paradigm", used to discuss the elements which the emerging missionary paradigm comprise. However, the emphasis in Bosch (1991) seems to be "ecumenical" whereas more attention will be drawn to "indigenous" in this study. Again, in Bosch (1991), "paradigm" is more preferred than "trend". The former is a concept or a theory, and are in Bosch's (1991) concept part of the mission, and therefore, part of the Church; whereas the latter merely suggests "inclination" and not part of the Church.

It is within this concept that I choose to approach this study by looking at the elements of driving forces or trends that attempt to shape the South African religious context rather than institutions, systems and structures which we deem the products of the trends involved. But because many trends are involved in shaping the South African religious context, I have selected a few of these for scrutiny, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis to probe the extent of their impact on Church in general and to the South African religious situation in particular. These will be identified and discussed in relevant sections.

Our selection of the elements of emerging indigenous religious trends was guided by those trends that attempt to reformulate the Bible as well as Christian theology into some categories peculiar to African thoughts, and in a manner relevant to the African context in general and South Africa in particular. Therefore, they are "indigenous religious trends" since most of these largely arise from Third World countries. These will include contextualization and its related forms such as inculturation, Black Theology, African Independent Churches, and African Theology. In chapter 6 each of these will be studied to determine the impact they have on the Church in mission and on the South African religious situation.

2.1.5 South Africa

We are limiting the study to South Africa for the simple reason that South Africa is changing in an alarming rate because of political transition from ethnicity (Bophuthatswana, KwaZulu, Transkei, KwaNdebele, Gazankulu, Venda, Lebowa, etc.)

and Apartheid to constitutional democracy. The change is not only due to urbanisation and sub-urbanisation but also due to the driving forces that are taking place.

Secondly, South Africa provides the broad context to study religious and cultural pluralism because of people of diverse races and languages sharing one country. Thirdly, we do not feel competent to assess indigenous religious trends in other areas of the world and therefore cannot predict what form they are taking in other areas or suggest strategies that should be employed elsewhere.

Although the focus of this study on current religious trends is on South Africa, it will be helpful, where necessary, to explore some trends in other parts of the world to help illustrate our point only as a result of sufficient evidence being at our disposal.

2.2 Language theory

We have attempted to minimize the use of sexist language, which employs the use of sexist pronouns, "he," or "she" or the combination, "he/she", except where conditions strongly dictate specificity. Therefore, in some places we have attempted to employ the use of plural pronouns to avoid masculine and feminine pronouns.

2.3 Summary

The foregoing discussion implies that defining major concepts raised in the theme of this study bespeaks the difficulty of dealing adequately with all the issues implied therein. Concern for the difficulty of understanding the nature of the Church is a worthy concern and a tremendous ideal. However, at this point in history, the fragmented nature of the church with deeply entrenched division renders it little more than a Utopian dream. Nevertheless, the concept of the Church as the community of the called ones seems to be magnified in the New Testament. The renewal point of the essence of Church will hardly take place without being involved in mission. Therefore, the Church in mission is the local church.

In the next chapter, it will be imperative to discover how the Church should carry out its mission in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends in South Africa. Indigenous religious trends are essentially particularistic, condensed in the phrase, "Africanisation of Christianity". They span the African worldview, which is often described as "holistic" (Seamands 1982; Gehman 2000; also van der Walt 2003). However, it would be necessary first to concentrate on the nature of the Church and its missionary mandate to the world, which is the theme we are now turning our attention to.

CHAPTER 3

Church in Mission: Its Missionary Mandate to the World

3.1 Introduction

This chapter briefly surveys the nature and character of the Christian Church. It reviews some early assumptions made on the nature of the Church, reviews the testimony of the Scriptures, considers formulated ecclesiology and concludes by surveying modern understanding on the nature of the Church. It will also describe the missionary mandate of the Church giving attention to its universality, its origin, content and scope and argues that the Church has an unalienable and comprehensive or all-inclusive mandate to the world. It will highlight the centrality of the biblical spirituality in mission, and the contemporary crisis in mission.

The data used in this chapter arise from critically evaluating representative sources of the essays of evangelisation, mission, and theologies of evangelism, including documents on mission, especially those of the World Council of Churches (WCC). I am probing their underlying assumptions to discover their relevancy³⁰ to the real human situation in general and to the South African situation in particular. Insights discovered in these sources will be critically evaluated to discover *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa.*

Throughout this chapter, however, my personal viewpoint, based on the brief experience I had as a religious minister and a mission worker, will be reflected. Such experiences and viewpoints stem from my participatory observation while involved in evangelism and mission work in Lesotho and South Africa. I strongly hold the view that the chief purpose of all persons – indeed of all creation – is to glorify God through worship and love. For this purpose, God has made himself known in his deeds of creation and

³⁰ In an attempt to evaluate the data from mission statements of the WCC and others, I will incline to hide in the background of the data, but my own convictions will come to play in the light of the Bible, which I esteem the rule of faith and practice. The relevancy of the data in the South Africa situation implies the evaluation data in terms of how to advance the cause of mission in this country.

redemption. Humanity is born in sin and forever in bondage to sin. God as the Redeemer has called into existence a people: the Church, who embodies, celebrates, and declares his name and his ways. Therefore, the Church lives to declare the whole story of God. This it does in many ways in line with the dimensions of its missionary mandate, including sacraments, oral testimony, community life and others.

Although I write as an insider being a South African in the South African situation³¹, I am wary to corroborate everything I had experienced with case studies in spite of their helpfulness. In an attempt to explicate this topic I will address myself to the following two broad outlines: 3.2 the nature and the Character of the Christian Church, and 3.3 Church in Mission: Its Missionary Mandate to the World. Based on the two points, I will advance my own proposal.

3.2 Church in Mission: Its Nature and Character

This section is not interested in the historical development of ecclesiology³² as such, but concerns itself with the nature of the Church. Certainly, concerns about the nature of the Church have not been more urgent than now and certainly not less than it was in the past. In South Africa, for instance, the Church has been regarded to some extent as a "racist institution" a "colonial institution" and on the other hand linked to racist oppression and a "capitalist exploitation". Moreover, the nature of the church is further complicated by descriptions such as, Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs), or "Settler Church," the "Afrikaner Church," the "Black Church" and the "White Church" (cf. de Gruchy 1979). These assertions and similar others do not only indicate that there is a growing crisis in understanding the nature of the Church in South Africa, but also make studies of this nature more imperative, especially a study on the nature of the Church needs to be revisited.

³¹ The South African situation was briefly described in the Background to this study.

³² We will refrain from dwelling too much long on the essence, form, model, and images of the Church. However, we will from time to time use some data from these concepts, if necessary, to illustrate our point.

In addition to these, it was some of the fundamental questions³³ on the nature of the church that gave rise to sixteen-century reformation (cf. McGrath 1994). However, reformation itself has not solved all the problems in this regard, and may have rather complicated them.

Generally, the post reformation Church is more confronted by a need to identify itself and to justify questions relating to its involvement in colonialism in the past and the violent situation at present³⁴. This section will thus argue that understanding the nature of the Church will result in better performance in carrying out its mission—mission hinges on the nature of the Church.

Unfortunately, it is easy to conceive the nature of the Church in simplistic terms. For instance, it was Luther (in van Engen 1991:60) who said,

Thank God a seven-year child knows what the church is, namely holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd (John 10:3). So children pray, 'I believe the one holy Christian Church'. Its holiness does not consist of surplices, tonsures, albs, or other ceremonies of theirs (papists) which they have invented over and above the Holy Scriptures, but it consists of the Word of God and true faith.

Some would go along with this definition, but the nature of the Church is rather an issue in South Africa.

To begin with, there is a compelling argument raised by David L. Mosoma (1991:31) recently, which is of much relevant to this chapter. He expressed a profound deep concern about the nature of the Church when he said,

To raise the question regarding the mission of the church today, one is inevitably prompted to examine the very nature and character of what it means to be the church". In other words, we should be able to ask,

³³ The Church reached its lowest ebb before the period of reformation. "Many realised that there was something drastically wrong with the Church. It was more difficult to put a finger on the basic problems. The only people who had the authority to do anything about it were the pope and his bishops. They made their diagnosis and applied the required remedy. Their unwillingness to change some of the most obvious problems led to frustration, anger and desperation" (Pillay & Hofmeyr 1991:131)

³⁴ The subject of Mission and Colonialism has fairly been discussed in Bosch (1991:302ff). But the fact of the contribution of the Church to violence (e.g. Rwanda, South Africa) as a result of Black theologians reckoning the Church a "formidable weapon," calls, according to Maluleke (1998), for a soul search on the part of Christians.

“Who are we?” then having learnt from what we are the next question in order is “What is our task?”

The implication raised above is that being, (Who are we?) precedes doing, (What is our task?) This is exactly what Bosch (1991:168) says – “Its primary task is to *be*...” (Emphasis not mine.). The Church has to be the “new creation” (: 168) and be conscious about that and that the Church “is the people called from diverse sorts of bondage to freedom, called to a sense of identity founded on a common bond with the God of righteousness” (August 2000:62),

Earlier, Jean-Marc Ela (1977:45) expressed the same concerns, emphatically saying, “No inquiry into the ministry can be made outside the framework of ecclesiology”. Ecclesiology simply being an understanding of the Church itself is intimately linked to mission. This is to say, the final analysis of the nature of the Church would point out that the Church is mission (Bosch 1991), and thus “one cannot speak about the mission of the church without, in the first instance, reflecting on the self-understanding of the church” (Mosoma 1991:31 also Bosch 1991:372). It is precisely the lack of this self-understanding³⁵, which constitutes the bulk of the problem.

To make his concerns even more vivid, Mosoma (1991:31) adds: “Before embarking on its commissioned mission activity, the church must first be the church” (1991:31). Mission has been delegated to the Church – the community of the redeemed. Philanthropists may undertake mission; but mission has been delegated to the Church.

This compels us to ask, “What is the Church?” As we do, it drives us back to the nature of the Church, and what the Church is. In order to tackle this question we need to be aware that we are not the first to inquire into the nature of the Church³⁶. We are always travelling on the route already trodden by others. Therefore, we need to watch our step

³⁵ Lack of self-understanding on the part of the Church exposed it to manipulation by the powers and governments of the world, reducing it to the level of a legitimising tool for various ideologies imposed by world governments on their subjects. In South Africa, for instance, some sections of the White Church legitimised *Apartheid* (de Gruchy 1979) and some sections of the Black Church legitimised violence (Tingle 1992 also Maluleke 1998). In so doing, the Church in both sections of society forfeited its calling to be the salt and the light of the world (Mat. 5) and became embroiled in national and international issues. Sometimes a belief is expressed without recourse to history that “the *co-operation* between Christianity and other religions, and Christianity and the state, were identified as indispensable factors in the survival of Christianity in Africa” (Pillay & Hofmeyr 1991:52). However, cooperation can logically be implemented between the equals. Besides that, cooperation need not necessarily lead to co-option.

³⁶ As we shall see, the nature of the Church continued to be a recurring theme during the course of the history of Christianity.

from time to time. In other words, we are not the first to experience crisis regarding the nature of the Church.

We have drawn attention to the fact that the Church needs self-understanding if it is to perform its mission with any degree of effectiveness. To grow this self-understanding the Church needs to grapple with issues of its nature and conform accordingly. This does not mean that the nature of the Church is static, but always transforms after the image of God, always to "put off the old self" and "put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4: 22,24).

Perhaps it will thus be more constructive if we commence our inquiry by taking into consideration some early assumptions on the nature of the Church. The intention is to illustrate what we have just said, that we are not the first to grapple with the questions affecting the nature of the Church. By tracing some of the historical issues on the nature of the Church, it is not our intention that the Church at present should reflect the life and practices of the Early Church³⁷. But our intention is to learn as much as we can from what others had discovered on the same subject in order to avoid unnecessary replications.

We shall develop our inquiry by examining briefly some assumptions about the nature of the Church during the Middle Ages, before rounding off by considering some assumptions on the nature of the Church in the Modern Period. This will help us gain a better perspective on the nature of the Church and its mission responsibility. The Church is not in the earth for itself and for its programmes. The Church is in the world for the world. It is for the sake of the world that Christ builds the Church, and not for itself. Therefore, the Church is the Church because it has a mission, and from time to time it has to evaluate itself in terms of its missionary mandate. Having had said that, let us move on to consider some early assumptions on the nature of the Church and discover how much we can learn from them.

³⁷ In subsequent chapters, we shall see that the Early Church, commonly known as the New Testament Church does not provide us with an ideal Church. The Early Church, in spite of its success in some areas where we currently experience difficulties, had its own problems.

3.2.1 Some Early Perceptions on the Nature of the Church: A Survey

The most we can hope to do in this section is to make some assumptions on the nature of the Church. This is due the fact that we do not claim to have the final word regarding the nature of the Church. The problem with the Church, though, is that during its formative centuries and "throughout most of history the nature of the church has been defined by divided Christians trying to establish the validity of their own existence" (Omanson 1984:231).

These groups of divided Christians often redefined the Church from time to time, not only when they came into collision with emerging circumstances that threatened their being, but also with the intention of accentuating some differences between one group of Christians and another. What we are attempting to stress above is clear in what Bosch (1991:248) observed between the Roman Catholic's and Protestant's definition of the Church. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to quote him in this instance:

Whereas the Catholic definitions of the church in this period tended to emphasize the external, the legal, and the institutional, the Protestant descriptions concentrated on the correctness of teaching and sacraments. Each confession understood the church in terms of what it believed its own adherents possessed and the others lacked, so Catholics prided themselves in the unity and visibility of their church, Protestants in their doctrinal impeccability...In these instances the church was defined in terms of what happens inside its four walls, not in terms of its calling in the world.

In our understanding on the nature of the Church, we should also do well to be careful about this. The nature of the Church should not be defined at the expense of its missionary responsibility, as it is the case in Bosch (1991), whom we have just quoted.

In the following sections a brief survey of some major assumptions adopted in regard to the nature of the Church is made. Our presentation will be thematic rather than chronological. Limitations of space necessarily require that our survey of this important theme be rather sketchy.

Therefore, for our purpose few of the assumptions held by the following movements will suffice: Montanism, Novatianism, Donatism, Albigensism, the Lollards, the Waldenses, the Catholics, and the Reformers. We have selected these movements since

they yield peculiar understanding on the nature of the Church. For convenience, we shall simply interpret each view as a paradigm.

3.2.1.1 The Montanist Movement Paradigm

For Montanists the Church is simply a movement of the Spirit. Spirituality features most in their conceptualisation of the Church. The Church is thus a spirit-sensed Church. Montanus exalted the Holy Spirit against the formalism which characterised the established Church, which he accused of committing sins against the Spirit (Shelley 1982).

Montanims emerged during the time in which the early hope of the return of Christ was growing dim in the Church (Walker (1918). In order to sensitise the Church of its responsibility to give attention to its spirituality, Montanism emphasized the Second Advent to revive the Church.

This became relevant at the time since the consciousness of the constant inspiration of the Spirit, characteristic of the Apostolic Churches, had also largely faded in the Church. Gradually the institution of the Church was placed above the autonomy of the worshiper (Taylor 1964).

Creativity in matters spiritual was constrained. Montanism rose largely in opposition to this formalism. Montanus claimed that his organisation conformed to the biblical standards of the true Church of Jesus Christ. According to Taylor (1964:74)

He declared that the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, promised in the Gospel of John was being expressed through him. He referred to himself as the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit and as a musical instrument under the orchestration of the Holy Spirit, on which heavenly melodies were played.

This winsome testimony of Montanus attracted the attention of many. It was the early organisation, which recognised the gifts of the Holy Spirit in women. Two of Montanus' earliest followers became famous as prophetesses, namely Priscilla and Maximilla.

The democratizing of spiritual leadership, on the other hand, gave the new order a special appeal to the masses. A host of itinerant preachers soon appeared. These were supported by the gifts of the faithful. They won many followers to the Montanist cause. They believed in the dispensation of the Paraclete and the speedy return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The work of the Paraclete was to produce "spiritual Christians." Those who gave no place to the Paraclete were classified as "carnal Christians". They also believed in the democratic priesthood whereas the official Church had set up a special class of clergymen. They emphatically announced that the end of the age was at hand and objected to low standards of moral behaviour. Again, according to Taylor (1964:76)

They insisted that women refrain from wearing ornamental clothing. They classified a second marriage as adultery, regardless of the circumstances; refused to make room for a restoration of grace after a Christian had lost his divine relationship; and stood out against the invasion of laxity in matters of personal conduct. Their extreme earnestness produced a craving for simplicity and sobriety that went against the accepted standards of their day.

To the Montanists the Church was not a school of sinners but the gathering of the sanctified and holy. Strict as this appears to be, Montanists won many followers to its cause and the most influential person to embrace Montanism was the "gifted fiery Tertullian" himself, who energetically declared himself favourable to this zestful type of Christianity.

In many respects Montanism declared itself as the true Church of Jesus Christ. According to Taylor (1964), they insisted that the unfolding revelation of God had passed through four distinctive phases. The first was called Natural Religion. In that stage, man lived in a state of innocence, and possessed an innate idea of God. The second was called Legal Religion. During this period man lived under the restrictions of the law. The third was called Gospel Religion. This was in force during the earthly life and ministry of Jesus. The fourth was called Paraclete Religion. This started with the revelation of the Paraclete.

However, as Walker (1918:103) points out, the rejection of Montanists and the decay of the hope of the expectation of the speedy end of the world undoubtedly greatly favoured the spread of worldliness in the church – a tendency which much increased its rapid growth from heathen converts between 202 and 250”.

It would be premature to conclude that Montanists were more preoccupied with the purity of the Church than its involvement in mission; and that the movement was in itself a move to abandon the world and all it came to stand for, does not represent them. However, Montanism went overboard when it began inclining heavily to prophetic enchanting to the neglect of the Scriptures. Being the new voice of the Spirit and turning their backs against the Gospel Religion, as they happen to call it, they lost touch with reality.

They should have been loyal to the Spirit while upholding the authority of the Scriptures. However, their understanding of the Church had indeed had a profound impact on the mission of the Church in spite of errors they incurred during the process. Among other things, they realised spiritual gifts in individual members of the Church, and helped to democratise the Church by placing emphasis on the priesthood of all believers.

3.2.1.2 The Novatian Movement Paradigm

Novatians believed that the Church is the body of Christ, and must be kept holy, as he is holy. However, this was not to be achieved through evolutionary means. According to Walker (1918:102), Novatian advanced to the rigorist position. Beginning it as a schism that lasted until the seventh century, he founded protesting churches widespread in the empire.

He renewed the older practices and denied restoration to all guilty of “sins unto death.” It is our conviction that a balance should have been made between being preoccupied by being and being preoccupied by doing. For instance, in the Novatian paradigm a dividing line between saints and sinners is thickly drawn.

The Church in these instances ceases to be the legitimate means of bringing sinners to Christ who can transform them by making them holy, and keep them holy more than the Church could do. In so doing the Church was too preoccupied by preserving itself at the expense of its mission. It became a bulwark to ward off sinners rather than welcoming and transforming them.

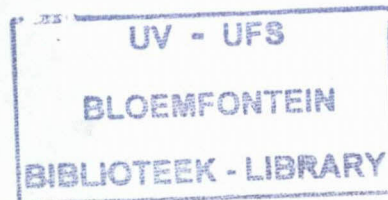
But since the credibility of the message of the Church does not only depend on the content of the message but also on the instrument through which the message is relayed, holiness must necessarily precede mission. In both cases, it is clear that there is a correlation between the understanding of the nature of the Church and its missionary performance. Consider, for example, mission during the colonial era; the Church has been understood as a civilising agency (Bosch 1991) – depaganisation and christianisation were mission strategies resulting in more emphasis of the former than the latter, if not to the exclusion of it.

Perhaps Novatians were correct to recapture the holiness of the Church. However, both holiness in the case of Novatians and the Spirit in the case of Montanism were given in the context of mission. Believers were to be sanctified not in view to go to heaven but to be sent into the world. “My prayer,” says Jesus, “is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one...Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world; for them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified” (John 17:15,17-19; NIV).

This is where emphasis should have been stressed during the colonisation of some Third World Countries. At the peak of colonialism, however, holiness and civilisation became synonyms (cf. de Gruchy 1979; Bosch, Saayman & Kritzinger 1980). However, civilisation, notwithstanding its benefits to indigenous people of Africa, succeeded in transforming or replacing indigenous cultures in whole or in part but it could not transform the hearts of indigenous people.

3.2.1.3 Donatist Paradigm

Similar to Novatians, the Donatists of North Africa focused on the purity of the church, claiming to be the only church that measured up to the biblical standard. They believed



in holy living, and disciplined living, insisting that "Christians should follow a discipline that would distinguish them from the unworthy and the unfaithful" (Taylor 1964:79).

They became sin-conscious. But their emphasis on cleanliness did not mean they were simply more heavenly bound than being task oriented since the person who embodied these ideals (holiness and cleanliness) was anxious to communicate them to someone else. The true Christian was not different from others because he wanted to be withdrawn, but because he desired to have something that was worth sharing.

Holiness did not mean exclusiveness. To believe that could have been an attempt to oppose the teaching or doctrine of holiness. The Donatists were, however, opposed by Augustine who held, *inter alia*, that the Church is a mixed body of sinners and saints appealing to the parable of Jesus about the wheat and tares (Mat. 13:24-30).

As Shelley (1982) noted, Augustine simply overlooked the fact that Jesus has been speaking of the whole world and not of the church. However, issues of the same controversy would resurface later during the Reformation that saw the split of the Church between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

3.2.1.4 The Albigenses Movement Paradigm

The Albigenses abhorred evil to an unusual extent. However, they went to the extreme when considering flesh as evil (Taylor 1964:81). Sin, they believed, originated in flesh. They required from converts a strict diet. Being slightly influenced by Gnosticism³⁸ and perhaps by Manichaeism³⁹, they also classified all things material as evil. Taylor (1964:81) points out that

The Albigenses classified themselves as the true church in sharp contrast to the false church (Catholic). Several distinctions were observed. The true church endured persecution and the false church prescribed it. The true church made repentance its first call and the

³⁸ Gnosticism held that flesh is evil and wanted to do their best to free themselves out of it.

³⁹ Manichaeism-began in Persia through the prophet Mani (ca 215 - 277). Strict hierarchical organization propagating a dualistic view of creation. Mani could not accept Christ's body as truly flesh. He led ascetic life.

false church put baptism first. The true church was democratic, and the false church was top-heavy with ecclesiastical titles. The true church was the bride of Christ and the false church 'is the woman of the Apocalypse, harlot, and the pope anti-Christ.

As the true Church, Albigenses owned no church buildings. They took a stand against taking oaths. They condemned capital punishment insisting instead that vengeance belongs to the Lord. War was considered unchristian. Like the previous groups, this group is more described by its practice than otherwise. Albigenses seem to have gone overboard, too, but they provided useful material that would characterise the nature of the Church.

3.2.1.5 The Lollards Paradigm

The Lollards held that true Christians put more emphasis on sincerity in worship than on the forms of worship. They put love and trust above all humanly manipulated techniques. The soul of man was made the dwelling place of the Lord instead of the material structure, which had been dedicated to the Lord. They also held on the authoritative of the Scripture. "The Bible was the supreme Authority in moral and spiritual issues" (Wycliffe in Taylor 1964:87).

For this reason, Wycliffe took the initiative in translating the Bible into English. Forms of worship are routine and dry. They hardly have any significance on the impact of the soul. In this arena, believers are baptised simply to join the church and not to have relationship with the Lord, the Head of the Church.

3.2.1.6 The Waldenses Movement Paradigm

The Waldenses rejected and denounced many doctrines held by the established Church, condemning masses, alms, and prayers for the dead; the existence of purgatory; the validity of episcopacy; indulgences; the taking oaths and the shedding of blood in war or in peace.

Instead, they memorized long passages of scripture and wove this type of truth into the fabric of their messages. They refused to frequent taverns and dances; they were truthful in speech; they avoided anger; and regarded the accumulation of wealth as evil. They waged war against immorality. Taverns and dances were not evil in themselves, but were often an occasion where immorality prevailed. Thus the Waldensens seized it as their task to declare war against immorality.

3.2.1.7 Roman Catholic Paradigm

The Roman Catholic Church would agree with so much that these movements have raised concerning the nature of the Church. However, the Roman Catholics claimed that the only true church was that over which the pope was supreme as successor of the apostle Peter.

Reference is made to "Peter and Paul as founders of the Church in Rome and to subsequent bishops as successors of the apostles (Shelley 1982). This is due to the adoption of the teaching by the Roman Catholic Church that Jesus Christ established the papacy with the apostle Peter, and the Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor (Shelley 1982).

This was a move toward laying emphasis on the institutionality of the Church. Gradually, institution of the Church was placed above the autonomy of the worshiper. It is clear that, except for the emphasis on the institution, nothing is said about the practice or the character of the Church.

3.2.1.8 The Protestant Reformers Paradigm

Martin Luther and John Calvin, following John Wycliffe, distinguished between the visible and invisible church, claiming that the invisible church consists of the elect only. Thus, an individual including the pope might be a part of the visible church but not a part of the invisible and true church (Omanson 1984). In an expanded description of the Church, reformers stressed that "Where the Word is rightly preached and the sacrament

rightly administered, there is the Church" (1984f:100). Protestantism, however, suffers constant schisms (Bosch 1991).

3.2.1.9 Preliminary Evaluation

The foregoing presentation proves that during the formative centuries of the Church, Christianity's power of self-renewal has frequently been demonstrated. When the institutionalised Church became fixed on its functional programmes, the Holy Spirit motivated people and cut a new channel, which brought revival of vital Christianity. The majority of those inside the established Church may not have perturbed by any of the movements mentioned above. After all, they were peripheral while the centre enjoyed self-sufficiency and self-confident. Yet these movements constituted a sign that all was not well in the Church. Though imperfect in their practice, they often pointed their fingers on the critical issue being neglected in the established Church. Not only did the Church lose its holiness but also its sense of contact with its Head, Jesus Christ.

The evangelistic fervour with which these movements carried their tasks proved that Christianised Christianity is always endeavouring to bring a lost world to a personal experience of Christ as Lord, through the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The Christianisation of Christianity would from time to time open the window to let fresh breeze into the programme-oriented Church.

In the next section, we would like to explore some more evidence on the nature of the Church and how it impacts on mission. This time we would survey the testimony of the New Testament before considering formulated ecclesiology.

3.2.2 Testimony of New Testament

A survey of the nature of the Church in the New Testament points that churches were not merely established, but were constantly being challenged to holy living. Much of the evidence in the New Testament point to the fact that the Church in its concreteness was not all that it should have been, and, therefore, the Church is always under the call to

perfection. Paul and other apostles did not establish perfect Christian communities as could be evidenced by the following analysis:

- The Church at Rome and the Romans were called saints (Romans 1:6,7) and yet were exhorted to go on to perfection (Rom. 12:1,2; 16:25-27).
- Corinthians were said to be in Christ (I Cor. 1:30) and yet were urged to desist from “everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Cor. 7:1 also 13:9,11).
- Galatians were members of the Church in Galatia (Gal. 1:2), yet were urged to crucify the flesh (Gal 5:24).
- Ephesians were blessed...in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing,” chosen, “to be holy and blameless in his sight...predestined...to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ” (1:3,4,5), yet they were “taught...to put off...old self which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of minds and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:22,24).
- Likewise Peter writes “to God’s elect...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit” (I Pet. 1:1,2), yet he exhorted them not to “conform to the evil desires...But be holy” (I Pet. 1:14,15ff).
- On the other hand, the Apocalypse churches were commended for the works they did, but were rebuked for their mediocrity and exhorted to repent and obey the Spirit (Revelation 2 – 3).

We could go on and on mentioning similar conditions in many instances in the rest of New Testament churches. These are sufficient to indicate that the New Testament Church was not what it should always have been. Being less than what they should have been, they conformed to the prevailing culture of the day that led Paul to say, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). In the same way, Peter urged “God’s elect” not to “conform to the evil desires” (I Pet. 1:14).

This proves once more that holiness and mission cannot be alienated. Where this happened as evidenced in the institutional Church mission is dealt a fatal blow. Jesus warned that, "if the salt loses its saltiness...It is not longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled by men" (Mat. 5:13).

The call to holiness is therefore, the call to mission. The Apostles of Jesus Christ mobilised their churches into mission through the call to holiness. Paul's call to the Ephesians Church to be holy (Eph. 1:1-14; 4:17 – 5:5; 5:6 – 6:9; 3:14-21) was in view of missionary engagement (Eph. 6:10-18). Therefore, "The Church's Mission is Mission in Holiness" (van Engen 1991:52).

Mission is drastically weighed down or lost if the Church conformed to the standards of the world. Therefore, the Church must be separate, be glorious and be radiant (Eph. 5:25ff). Unfortunately, the Church did not pause long enough to reflect on the messages of the New Testament with any perceptible degree. "To speak of the holiness of the Church is deeply disturbing. In ecclesiology, we have had to create some careful distinctions—such as visible vs. invisible; form vs. essence; ideal vs. real; institution vs. community, and imperfect vs. perfect—to make sense out of the pain we feel concerning the lack of holiness of the Church " (van Engen 1991:52)

Let us conclude this section by reviewing the weight of evidence on the nature of the Church in the New Testament. Omanson (1984:231) points out that if we were to be true to the New Testament testimony, it should be acknowledged; there are multiplicity of images and concepts that contribute to the understanding of the nature of the church. But why this "multiplicity"? That is exactly the fact – the New Testament is concerned about the nature of the Church because it impacts directly to its mission.

Paul Minear (in Omanson 1984:231) lists ninety-six images, which he classifies as (1) minor images, (2) people of God, (3) the new creation, (4) the fellowship in faith, and (5) the body of Christ. Some of these may be listed to demonstrate the diversity of the images of the Church: the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a letter from Christ, branches of the vine, the elect lady; the bride of Christ, exiles, ambassadors, fighters of Satan, sanctified slaves, priesthood, a new creation, friends, sons of God, household of God, members of Christ, spiritual body, temple of God.

Indeed there are too many of the images of the Church than we can handle in the study of this magnitude. They are resourceful in helping to identify certain aspects on the nature of the Church. Omanson (1984:231) is quite thoughtful to say, "Though such a plethora of images exists, it is nonetheless possible and useful to find the major concepts that hold these many images together" and these were to be found in the formulated ecclesiology to be discussed in the next section.

3.2.3 Formulated Ecclesiology: An Evaluation

From the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D, and reaffirmed in Ephesus 431 A.D, and Chalcedon 451 A.D the Church has reaffirmed itself to be "one, holy catholic and apostolic". "I believe in one holy, apostolic and catholic church" was the creed. Granted that these are generally accepted as the marks of the Church, the primary issue now concerns their meaning, more especially in the light of mission.

Dunning (1988) believes that these attributes were first a present reality in the early church but that only gradually became a theory or dogmatic claim to be used polemically. They are thus not the result of organisation or administration but are the very creation of the Spirit. Thus, the marks of the Church came from within and not imposed from without. Being present reality in the early church means returning to the New Testament to identify what these marks might have meant, interpreted from missiological point of view.

3.2.3.1 The Church is One; Unity for Mission

Owing to the fragmented unity of the Church at this point in history, to speak of the Church being one seems contradictory in terms. Nevertheless, the correct view as Thomas (1956) has it is, not that the Church is one, but that there is one Church. Jesus Christ himself is the founder of the Church. He said, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mat. 16:18) and the question, whether Jesus Christ did found the Church or not is simply cleared here.

Being the founder of the Church, he is the Lord of the Church. Jesus founded the Church in anticipation of the complex human situation to develop in the future. Unfortunately, sight is often lost of what Jesus predicted about the future (Mt. 23.). In other words, in all emerging human situations, simple or complex, the Church must always be able to declare, it was founded for such times as these. "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

It was after he had confronted the religious status quo of the time and perceived the underlying inefficiency of mere religiosity of the day that Jesus spoke of founding his own Church. He suffered and died and rose from the dead to inhabit the Church that he has founded through his living presence "I will be with you till the end of the world" (Mat. 28:20), he said.

Jesus Christ fights the battles of sin on behalf of his own people "Because he will save his people from their sin" (Mat. 1:21). "Do not afraid, I have conquered the world". Consequently the Gospel arise from what Christ has achieved for us not what we can achieve through Him. The Church is commissioned to announce the victory of Jesus over the Evil one who controls the world through the forces of evil (Heb. 2:15). The content of this announcement is succinctly comprehended in the Sotho hymnal, *Lifela tsa Sione* song No 67:3

E-eang, lere ke ba shoetse,
Ke ba lefetse libe
Le Satane ke mo hlotse
Mat'a hae a felile
Sefapanong
Topollo e hlahile

Go and say I died for them
I paid all for the theirs sins
And I have conquered the Satan
His power has been destroyed
In the cross
Redemption has come

Ecclesiologically, however, the objective ground of the unity of the Church finds expression in Paul's statement: "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). In view of this, Dunning (1988) says that it would be appropriate to maintain that Christ founded the Church or that he is part of the Church and even to say that he is the Church and that all who became identified by faith with him are in him and share the unity of the person.

He is thus the Head of the Church and the Church is the Body of Christ (Eph. 5). But the objective ground of the unity of the Church is also found in the expressive desire of

Christ that the Church should be one (Joh. 17:21). In contemplating these, it would be clear that it is not unity of structures that is envisaged but unity of the person, for Christ cannot be divided (I Cor. 1).

Subjectively, the unity of the Church is the work of the Holy Spirit which is in turn rooted in Jesus Christ. In both cases, objectively and subjectively, the urge is not for Church to create unity but to maintain it (cf. Bedwell 1976). The Holy Spirit is the founder and the creator of the Church unity. Unity of the Church is thus a divine product and not the result of human organizations or schemes.

The urge for the Church to maintain unity means that it should be aware of things that would divide it within and without and make effort to prevent them as they occur. We should thus not allow denominational labels to deprive us of fellowship with other members of the body of Christ. The Church is bigger than the biggest denomination.

We must also not allow differences in interpretation of doctrine and the Bible to blind us to the fact that God, the Father, the Son and Spirit are indivisibly one, and our major loyalty is to God, not a society. But even alertness and effort are inadequate alone. There are qualities of character that are pre-requisite to the maintenance of unity. Paul mentions them in his exhortation of the Ephesians; they are lowliness, meekness, long suffering and forbearance. Listing the opposite of these qualities, we shall see at once that they are the constants cause of strife – Pride, pugnacity, impatience, and touchiness. These qualities are the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

From the beginning, disunity has always threatened the Church and its mission. Wherever it happened, Early Church leaders struggled manfully to maintain the ideal within the early Christian congregations. The disunity of the Church has been ascribed to immaturity in faith (cf. I Corinthians 3).

We conclude this section by making brief notes on some missionary implications on the unity of the Church and the challenge that this unity poses to the Church.

Unity being itself a gift, our task is to transform ourselves in terms of understanding its implications. This becomes more imperative if we were to have something to say about our cultures since we are more passionate about them.

Steve Ratlief (1981) observed that every culture has trends. If they are not understood, it is fair to say that they will be misunderstood. He outlines three cultural trending that influence the concept of mission and internationalisation; they are: culturalistic exclusiveness, culturalistic similarities and culturalistic pluralism.

○ Cultural Exclusiveness

This is a dangerous trend in the world today, in a wave of nationalism where every country begins to believe that its customs and way of life are superior to all others. Ratlief concedes that "every man must have privilege of cultural exclusiveness at this point. However, the great danger arises when exclusiveness becomes a trend in other areas and I reject something from another culture, not because it is wrong but because it is different. This is where as church of multiple nations and cultures, we must unite ourselves, not around our nationalism, but around the banner of heart holiness.

○ Cultural Similarities

This is much-debated topic in the world today. Many say that cultures are so different that each must develop its own approach to world adaptation. This is an ever-eluding problem in culturalism. However, in the Church, we must major on our cultural similarities. Differences usually cause division, when debated, but produce unity when recognized. Culturalism does not say, "I must be right", but rather "I want to be recognized, respected, and given opportunity for expression". Therefore, our challenge in missiology is going to be in the area of developing ministries around the great understanding similarity and measurable results that we enjoy through heart holiness - love for the lost, a desire that all should know Jesus Christ, that all may hear the message of heart holiness.

Nevertheless, cultural similarity on the part of the Church should not only be the result of having a common understanding about something, or sharing something but also the result

by the grace of God of transcending our own cultural limitations and expand to achieve cultural identity.

o Cultural Pluralism

This trend in our world is almost overwhelming. No longer can we define our area of service as one thing or another. With the rapid shifts of population and a liquid society⁴⁰, we are constantly faced with opportunity and challenge of pluralism. Pluralism is a situation where the solution is obvious. However, because of different trending, the answer seems to avoid us. We recognize that we are a part of a pluralistic condition, where everyone else believes he is right also. The basic rule in working in across-cultural situation is adjust. If all else fails, adapt.

3.2.3.2 The Church is Catholic: Universality of Mission

Catholicity of the Church is another aspect of the unity of the Church. Ignatius of Antioch (in Omanson 1984:232) wrote in the second century, "Wherever the bishop is, there is his people should be, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.

However, this, according to Greathouse and Dunning (1982), identifies the Church with the clergy and actually, the laity are not included. But the rational view is that to speak on the catholicity of the Church is to refer to the entire church, which is both universal and local and which has common identity of origin, lordship, and purpose. Dunning (1988:532) elaborates on this by saying:

The universality of the Church is rooted in the work of Christ as inclusive of all persons. It is not a geographical concept but refers to the all-embracing of the atonement. Paul puts it succinctly, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

⁴⁰ Heraclitus is believed to have said: "Everything flows and that we cannot step in the same river twice" (Knitter 1985:7).

But catholicity is not merely universality in age, race, etc., which would be rather a consequence not a cause, but is due to the universal Christian life based on spiritual truth. It must include all who are united to Christ (cf. Thomas 1956).

Although many would readily accept the universality of the Church, "Western world has for too long formulated theology and mission strategy in isolation from the churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America, the church of the two-third world" (Omanson 1984:232). This implies a narrow mission strategy.

The catholicity of the Church means that no nation is excluded from the provision of atonement. This is, according to Dunning (1988) the basis for the apostle's denial in Romans 11:1 that God has rejected the Jew. He contends that "the fact that the Kingdom is taken from Israel and given to the Church is no basis whatsoever for any anti-Semitism" (1988:532).

The universality of the Church on the other hand, implies that the Church is not limited by geographical and cultural factors. It is among the poor and the rich alike. It relativises myths of poverty and richness, and deals relatively with issues of social status.

3.2.3.3 The Church is Holy: Holiness for Mission

The Church is holy mainly by virtue of being separated from the world and unto God. Some Systematic theologians have called this positional holiness (cf. Metz 1991; Lo 1993). Generally, salvation is not the result of individual or collective human effort to better their lot any more than patients trying to effect operation to their own bodies to cure the diseases.

Salvation is from the Lord, and will always be from him. To understand salvation one has to see the world from divine perspective. From the divine perspective, in spite of the absence and/or the presence of objective oppressive social structures the condition of human being does not change. "The heart is evil" (Jeremiah 17:9-10); and it is always so until it is transformed by the Lord.

Liberation is consequently accepted on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done and by living accordingly. The freedom that Jesus Christ gives the Church today is "If you want to be liberated in the context of oppressive situation, live as if you are liberated". Consequently liberation is a choice and not a condition.

In the final analysis Christ teaches, liberation is not what has taken place in the world, but what has taken place in him and he gives us liberation that he has won on our behalf. Conditions may change for the better in the world, or in the country but if I do not change, I will still feel oppressed, discriminated and alienated; alienated from God, the Father of Jesus Christ.

Human beings are their own oppressors and their own slave masters; and even become their own gods. We oppress others based on the extent that we had oppressed ourselves and hate others because of the extent we hate ourselves. We also experience oppression on the basis of the extent of knowing how much capacity we have to oppress others and so experience hatred on the basis of the extent of knowing how much we can hate others.

Conversely, if you do not experience oppression you cannot oppress. Conditions for liberation may have been created but true liberation may not be experienced. Those who can experience freedom are those who had experienced suffering and not those who never had suffered. The Church is the new community embodied in Christ, "and all who are 'in him' constitute the true Israel, the Church" (Taylor *et al* 1977:561).

Missiologically, holiness is the essence of freedom. Jesus is mandated to proclaim freedom to the captives (Lk. 4:18ff). Holiness is the condition of being liberated from the carnal mind, which submits to conformity with the world to avoid conflict. Thus, a call to holiness is a call to freedom. The Church can only free the world by freeing itself. Therefore, mission to the Church is mission to the world. We transform the world as we transform ourselves. We are the world.

3.2.3.4 The Church is Apostolic: Involvement in Mission

Ephesians 2:20 states that, the Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone". Different views are held as to the term "apostolic". For Omanson (1984:233), "Apostles are those who were eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus and prophets are Christian prophets who were the spokesmen of the risen Lord". In the case of Kung (1968:355), the term apostolic has nothing to do with office. He elaborates further:

The apostles are dead; there are no new apostles. But the apostolic mission remains. The mission of the apostles was more than the persons of the apostles themselves. The apostolic mission is now no longer instituted directly by the Lord, but indirectly by men...Who then are the followers of the apostles?...There can only be one basic answer: the Church. The whole church, not just a few individuals, is the follower of apostles"

Therefore, the Church is apostolic. The apostolicity of the Church must be understood in the context that very early there was an emphasis on the unity of the Church, which is a product of the Spirit. According to Greathouse and Dunning (1982:98);

In the earliest days of post-apostolic Christianity the emphasis was laid on unity in terms of the faith inherited from the apostles. Even though it was scattered throughout the world, it shared the same truth. Irenaeus, for instance, supported this by maintaining that there was an unbroken succession of bishops going back to the apostles themselves, which guarantees that the faith of the church is identical to their original proclamation. Thus, the term apostolic appears in this connection as a mark of the church.

On the other hand, Thomas (1956:277) proposes two tests to explicate the meaning of the apostolicity of the Church: (1) continuous succession; (2) primitive truth. Then he elaborates thus:

The first is impossible, since there are gaps, which cannot be covered by any knowledge we possess. Besides, by itself it would be no guarantee of genuine adherence to apostolic truth and life. The second is verifiable, since we have the New Testament, which represents the apostolic teaching. This is why we are able to speak of the Church as "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets"

In view of these developments, Omanson (1984:233) points out that the adjectives: "one, holy, catholic, apostolic" are terms specific enough to describe the essential nature of the church and yet allow for differences within denominations and churches in the ways in which each fulfils the mission and ministry of the church in the world. Such differences within denominations and churches, however, mainly find expression in the concept of the Church as the Body of Christ. This image is considered briefly here because of its rich in what it communicates about the nature of the church.

The concept of the Church as the body of Christ carries with it one of the significant missiological implications. First, the Church does not have an independent existence. It "is not merely an independent creation of the Spirit, but an enlargement of the incarnate life of Christ" (Wiley 1946:366).

Williams (1968:62) concurred insightfully when he said, "the risen Christ gathers his disciples to himself in such a way that they are called by him to continue in history the work of his incarnate life. They are his body for his work in the world". Meanwhile, Allan Richardson (1958:256) concludes his reflections on the nature of the Church by saying, "The Church is thus the means of Christ's work in the world; it is his hands and feet, his mouth and voice". Being the means, the existence of the Church is not an end in itself. It exists for the extension of the Kingdom of God in the world.

God has called the church out of the world for a purpose. He intended his creation to have fellowship with him and with one another. When that fellowship was broken, God called the people of Israel to be "a light to the nations" (Isa. 42:5-8); but when Israel failed God called a remnant (Isa. 10:20-22). In the fullness of time, God himself entered fully into human history in the birth of Jesus Christ (Omanson 1984).

Secondly, the Church as the Body of Christ also suggests evangelistic activism. The evangelistic aspect of Church is emphasised. Evangelism is an important aspect of mission (Bosch 1991). It is the communication of the Good News to the poor. But the Good News is for those who believe (Joh. 3:16).

The Good News essentially announces that Christ has died for us and paid the debt of our sin; he has conquered the Devil and ended the Devil's kingdom. Therefore, and on that basis we are exhorted to approach the throne of God without fear (Heb. 10:19-25).

However, there are still some strong holds of the Devil left to be dealt with by the Church. Groups of people have not heard the Good News.

3.2.4 Modern Perceptions on the Nature of the Church

In this section, we would like to survey some of the perceptions of Black theologians about the nature of the Church. It is important that we shall examine their views on the Church, since Black Theology was instrumental in mobilising some sections of the Church to engage in the struggle for political liberation⁴¹. To do this we shall depend much on some of their writings.

Although an evaluation of Black Theology will be explored in chapter 6, it is necessary here that we shall make some brief notes about the subject itself. According to Tingle (1992:72).

The term 'Black Theology' has been used very inconsistently in South Africa. Some theologians have used it to describe a theology derived specifically from an African cultural context, which might involve the fusion of Christianity and African forms of spirituality. This is not a theology of liberation in the political sense, and is thus perhaps better described as 'African theology' rather than 'Black Theology'.

Perceptions of Black theologians on the nature of the Church leave much to be desired. Socio-political interests largely inform their perception. It is even worse that Black theologians do not envisage one Church but multiple churches sometimes classified as it were along political interests. The *Kairos Document* (1986) says: "There are in fact two Churches in South Africa – a White Church and a Black Church". However, the division of the Church is not our concern at this stage, but the nature of the Church in the perceptions of Black theologians.

⁴¹ Thoko Mdlalose stated in the *African Communist* that "In our country, the majority of those who will participate in the final overthrow of the apartheid colonial regime are church goers...Having realised that the majority of the working masses in our country are Christians, revolutionaries should then look for ways and means of involving the Church in the national liberation struggle in general and the working-class struggle in particular.

Surveying through some of their perceptions on the Church, it is evident that sight has been completely lost on the nature of the Church and its mission. In fact thinking about what is often said about the Church complicates matters. However, we should also not lose sight of the fact that the Church has often been defined in terms of its mission strategy than its essence. In the next sections, we will limit ourselves to some written assertions on the nature of the Church in the eyes of Black theologians.

3.2.4.1 The Church as a Racial Institution

Accusations have been often levelled against the Church that it has modelled political forms in South Africa. Since racism in South Africa is a major factor, Black theologians emphasise the painful fact that the Church is a racist as the rest of society and therefore in a fundamental sense a part of the problem rather than a part of the solution. Goba 1980b:101) says: "The Church in this country is just as racist in her structures as our society".

In describing the Church in these terms, Black theologians also fail to state what the Church is, or should have been or should be. Describing the Church, as a racial institution does not adequately say anything other than those Black theologians themselves proving ignorance on the nature of the Church.

There is also no substance in describing the Church as a "structurally racist" (Moore 1973:78f) simply because all major appointment are filled by Whites and since church publications, finances and theological education are in White hands (cf. Kritzing 1989:102). Granted that this is the case on the part of the White church, what about some Black churches where similar arrangements have been made.

However, we concede the fact that, "Since racism is contrary to the essence of the Church, its presence has defiled the body of Christ" (Kritzing 1989:102). Nevertheless, the difficulty is failure to distinguish between the facts whether the Church is indeed racist or live in a racist society and/or whether individuals within the Church were all racist.

The fact that the Apostle Peter in the New Testament had some racial inclinations (Acts 10; Gal. 2), does not render the whole New Testament Church a racial institution. Another difficulty is lack of clarity as to which Church is referred to as a "racist institution"? What about the AIC, indigenisation, acculturation, or accommodation, etc. should not the church take the form of individual ethnic or race for the sake of its mission in the context of the people concerned? One is simply raising these issues in this section to prove that some Black theologians did not take the nature of the Church with the seriousness it deserved.

3.2.4.2 The Church as a Colonial Institution

In the eyes of some Black theologians the Church was a "political tool" in the hands of the oppressors used clandestinely to subjugate the Black people in South Africa. Nxasana & Fisher (1976:54) went on to say that after the initial military subjugation of the Black people, colonialists needed a religion that would teach the people the virtues of obedience and poverty. This is the extent to which the Church had become a tool in the hands of the colonialists.

But it raises concerns whether colonialists manipulated only the Church to subjugate and oppress indigenous people in this country. Not so much is heard about the manipulation of traditional chiefs⁴². Were all of them exceptions to the manipulation of the colonialists? Who would have welcomed the colonialists before the Church was established? What role did the African chiefs play in this regard?

This does not mean the Church could not have been used to further colonial political interests. However, sight is often lost of the degree that the Church had resisted colonialism (cf. Chitando 1998). On the other hand, describing the Church as a colonial institution, it is sheer generalisation; and it could even be a miracle that a handful of colonialists could turn the whole Church into a colonial institution. What should have

⁴² Some chiefs may have exploited their own people. Exploitation is thus not something exclusively characterising colonialists. "Traditionally, the masses have been subject to long-term exploitation by their rulers and chiefs or aristocracy. However, prior to colonization by the western powers they had a rather self-reliant economy, with a strong sense of communal solidarity" (EATWOT Report in Documents on Mission 1985:213)

been the case is, some sections of the Church could have been manipulated for this purpose.

3.2.5 Preliminary Evaluation

This section dealt with the nature of the Church. The difficulty of dealing adequately with all the issues on the nature of the Church, especially in so brief a compass, is explicit in this presentation. In our evaluation, therefore, we may simply attempt to identify some implications of the foregoing brief survey.

To begin with, some early assumptions on the nature of the Church and even during the Middle Ages centred more on what the Church should be than should do. Quality not quantity was of essence to the movements under consideration.

The early Christian groupings would seem to have unanimously agreed that the Church should be holy and blameless before the Lord. Most of these movements rose as forms of resistance to moral laxity on the part of the institutional Church. However, holiness here amounted to exclusivity rather than a calling. This is apparent from the fact that the lapsed were denied re-entry into the Church. The relationship was more premised on the holier-than-thou-attitudes. In all practical instances, the purpose of the existence of the Church did not appeal then. The struggle has been one of identifying the "true Church," and each group claimed to be the one and the rest as false Churches.

On the other hand concerns for the unity of worldwide Christendom are worthy and a tremendous ideal to pursue. The Church is one and, therefore, many would believe that unity as the mark of the Church is imperative much the same as the rest of others.

However, at this point in history, the fragmented nature of the church with deeply entrenched divisions renders it little more than a Utopian dream. Issues of homogeneity, even socio-political issues much more than doctrinal differences are rationally being entrenched dealing a blow again to efforts toward the unity of the Church.

While the efforts toward the unity of the Church need not be abandoned, since some progress may be made, it would seem wiser to focus on those areas that would give

most promise of fulfilling the New Testament vision of the people of God. However, it appears to us that the local congregation is the most likely locus for the church to be the church.

Pragmatically, while the body of believers in a limited situation needs connections to address the worldwide responsibilities laid upon it, it is truly possible for the marks of the church to be brought to maximum expression in this setting. Here is where spiritual renewal has its greatest impact. If this observation has validity, the importance of the local bishop (pastor) is paramount. Connectional offices are important to facilitate the broader work of the church, but they are one step removed from the vital cells that compose the Body of Christ.

As the Spirit works in the group, unity results and vice versa. On the other hand, our intense desire for the unity of the Church should not be allowed to gravitate toward uniformity. Uniformity is unity for the sake of unity. However, the unity that Jesus Christ prayed for was the unique one, which would make the world know that Christ is God and the Church is in Christ.

Catholicity is an outlook rather than a geographical concept, it can be present when the local congregation knows no barriers of race or social status but embraces all men as brothers and draws a circle around all Christians in terms of acceptance, thus eliminating exclusivistic attitudes antithetical to perfect love. Defining the boundaries of Christian fellowship by the principle of cultural homogeneity is a digression from true catholicity (cf. van Engen 1991).

The way we sought to define holiness is also very important. We said that the holiness of the Church is not absolute but positional. The Church is holy first by virtue that it belongs to Christ. It has died and rose with Christ. But it does not all ends there – to live up to this reality the Church must be cleansed and be radiant and be without blemish (Eph. 5:25ff). This has been the consequence of most New Testament messages. Holiness will not be achieved by decrees or through evolutionary means, but by faith in Jesus Christ. In this manner, the Church still needs to work out to perfect its holiness for reverence of the Lord.

Apostolicity likewise implies that the Church is in continuity with the Apostolic Church not only in its teachings but also in its mission. It still thus builds on the foundations set by the apostles in both teaching and mission. Jesus Christ delegated to the apostles the task of teaching in the context of mission. Teaching like the nature of the Church cannot, and should not be isolated from the context in which both were intended.

Holiness cannot be experienced in isolation from missionary engagement. Therefore, concerns about doctrinal correctness and the nature of the Church should not obscure the progression of the Church in its missionary calling. When embarking on their missionary tasks the apostles were not but relatively perfect.

Some still experienced noticeable shortcomings. For instance it was when conducting his missionary tasks when Peter realised, "how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts 10:34-35). Here it was Peter, growing and maturing not outside the context of mission. Perhaps we can safely say apostolicity is more realized in the missionary mandate of the Church than otherwise; and to that subject we now wish to turn our attention.

Generally, the Church in South Africa has been drawn into political fiasco, and it became an object of criticism from both side of the divide – the Apartheid regime representing a right wing, and liberation movement representing a left wing. Each wing wanted to win the Church on its side. In their evaluation, Black theologians describe the Church as a racist institution, and a colonial institution. It is ironic, however, that Black theologians describe themselves as "Anti-racist," and "Non-racial" while describing their own enterprise as "Black theology". It is a Black theology that continues to uphold the "Black consciousness" strategy of not forming alliances at present with White "progressive democrats" (Kritzinger 1989:123).

Having had considered the nature of the Church, in the next section we shall focus on the missionary mandate of the Church. The nature of the Church is the beachhead for the execution of its missionary mandate. The Church draws more strength from its nature than the content of its missionary mandate.

Conversely, the nature of the Church has a tremendous impact on the mission of the Church. However, the nature of the Church is not merely a static objectified or

quantified ideal of being. It is rather a dynamic impact shaped and reshaped by its involvement with the world. Simply an execution of a job description is not enough. It is our very being that the world would need to be in touch with.

3.3 Church in Mission: Its Missionary Mandate to the World

From what we have said above, we could infer that lack of sufficient understanding of the nature of the Church has often led the Church to distort the purpose of its being in the world. Often, the Church has been manipulated for various interests.⁴³ The reason is that the role of the Church has not properly been defined.

In this section will describe the origin, universality, content and scope of the missionary mandate of the Church. We shall begin by considering the missionary mandate of the Church as performed by the disciples of Jesus. We shall investigate what made them succeed to convince their world about the redemptive message of Christ. While doing so, we shall bear in mind the fact that, it is important that the Church learn and understand its missionary mandate in order to know its role on earth.

Essentially we shall intensely argue that the Church has been given a holistic and comprehensive missionary mandate to the world comprising important dimensions such as social, evangelism, political, cultural and economical. In chapter 4 we shall explore these dimensions in some greater detail. For now attention will be focused on the Missionary Mandate of the Church.

3.3.1 Church in Mission: its Universal Mandate

Initially, a mandate simply means authorization or in this context, a divine permission the content of which is summarised in the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19-20) and elsewhere.

⁴³ Mention has been made that the Church became a tool for legitimating racial policies on one hand and violence struggle on the other hand.

The scope of the mandate of the Church is acceptably universal; it is global and we shall have more to say about this later on. It is thus trans-national, political and cultural. It is essentially a divine sanction to tell the world how much God has done already for humanity in Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Through Jesus Christ of Nazareth, God has not only entered the human history but had also reconciled the world to him and had given us life. These facts have intensely revolutionary effects to human life and behaviour if accepted by faith.

It should be remembered that God's mandate is not new. But when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples of Jesus in the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) they were convinced that God did not only give them power but also confirmed the mandate to evangelise the world.

Transformed as they were through being "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4), the disciples of Jesus influenced their world by expounding the events that took place in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ of Nazareth and explicated their implications to the world. "We are the witness of everything," they said (Acts 10:39).

According to the Book of Acts and in line with the command of Jesus Christ they started from Jerusalem, all Judea, and Samaria and to the world, causing "trouble all over the world" (Acts 17:6). Taylor (1964:60) correctly says

The disciples launched on the greatest evangelistic crusade that has been witnessed in the history of Christianity. The mighty Acts of the Apostles gives a detailed account of the amazing spread of Christianity through dedicated servants. The disciples caught the evangelistic passion of Christ, and He "so implanted his infinite purpose in their inmost being that 'they went everywhere preaching'".

It was evident that the launch of "the evangelistic crusade" is as a consequence of experiencing the transforming power of Jesus Christ in their lives without whom they cannot do anything (Joh. 15:5). They were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4) and in their lives Christ became alive again and continued his missionary work in the world.

Through their ministry, Christianity spread to the world transforming people as it did. Many of the major centres of the world then, Ephesus, Corinth, Galatia, Rome and

others centres were reached by the Gospel. Disciples of Christ were simply armed with a simple story;

God sent to the people of Israel, telling the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ who is Lord of all; God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil because God was with him...They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen...He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins, through his name (Acts 10:36-43)

The universality of the missionary mandate of the Church was largely based, not only on the Great Commission, but also on the conviction that was at the bottom of the hearts of the Disciples of Christ. The survey of the New Testament makes it clear that they were passionate about the mission that Christ handed down to them.

They were convinced that sin had entered the world and that sin begets death (Rom. 5:12; 6:23); they were convinced that humanity is unable to save themselves from sin (Mt. 1:21), and they were convinced that Jesus Christ saves from all sin (Acts 4:12). These factors motivated them to announce the Saviour of the world to all people, regardless of their creed, colour or faith.

Unlike the Old Testament prophets, they did not ridicule the idols of the heathen in order to win them over (cf. Konig 19). You do not win a person by insulting his intelligence, but by understanding the nature of his problem. The Disciples of Christ preached the message that evoked questions, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37); "Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

They did not develop and export or advance a particular line of theology, believing it would transform the world. For them, Christ transforms the world (Act 4:12). They drew much strength to confront and transform their world from being transformed by having opened their heart and accepted the story of what God has done for them in Christ and was doing through them by the Holy Spirit. Their task was simply announcing the story of God's acts in Jesus Christ and how this had transformed them. Therefore they did not export theology to mediate salvation to the world but their own

lives had an impact on the world. It is life the world needs. Mission is life in Mission and not ideology.

3.3.2 Church in Mission: Origin of its Missionary Mandate

The foregoing assertions clearly indicate that the missionary mandate of the Church originated from Yahweh. It is Yahweh who initiated mission (Bosch 1991; Senior & StuhlmueLLer 1989). Theologians correctly concur that there is no other mission except the mission of God, or *Missio Dei* (cf. Senior & StuhlmueLLer 1989; Bosch 1991; Saayman 1995).

Senior & StuhlmueLLer (1989:36) go further to say that God himself was the missionary. They argued, "The earliest appreciation or understanding of God within the Bible did not centre upon God as maker of the universe or as creator of the human race but as *saviour* of the chosen people of Israel" (emphasis not mine).

What has been said suggests the following factors: firstly, the missionary mandate of Christ is in continuity with the Old Testament mission, which was entrusted to the nation of Israel. Secondly, certain conditions gave rise to factors that had Israel partially succeed in discharging the mandate given to them, and third, Jesus Christ realized God's mandate by his exceptional obedience to the Father.

The story of the Old Testament is the story of the salvation of God. God, Yahweh, chose the Israelite nation as an objective lesson for the world to reveal himself as the Saviour. His choice of Israel was not influenced by the conditions in which the Israelites found themselves⁴⁴, but by the nature of God himself: God is the Saviour.

However, situations gave rise to conditions in which the Israelites regarded God's choice for their nation as a special favour from God, opposed to other nations. They nationalised God and became exclusive. God had become the God of Israel. This gave rise to the partial success of Israel in executing its missionary calling. Therefore, Christ

⁴⁴ In his description of the Exodus events Fr. Albert Nolan (in Tingle 1992:55) overlooked this point when he said, "God chose the Israelites not because of their virtues but because of their sufferings. He chose one small group of oppressed people, the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, for the sake of all oppressed people and in order to bring about the liberation and salvation of the whole human race." The fact is that, God chose Israel because He loved them (Deut. 7:7). Therefore the whole purpose of God's choice to Israel was to demonstrate His love.

did not have his own separate mission other than continuing with the one of the Old Testament. He was anointed by the Spirit of God to carry out the same God's mission (Lk. 4:18ff)

The manner in which the mandate has been given to the Church deserves brief attention. Verkuyl (1975:154 *et seq.*) correctly maintains that the missionary commandment appears in the context of Christology (Logos), whereas its execution is described in the context of pneumatology (Spirit).

The Christological context of the missionary commandment indicates that the risen Christ helps the church in making all nations disciples (Mat. 28:19ff.). But to do so the apostles need to be filled and assisted by the Holy Spirit and this is the pneumatological context.

Both the Christological and Pneumatological dimensions are very important and should not be separated from one another, and from these we discern the involvement of the Trinity in mission. The Father initiated it, the Son gave it and the Holy Spirit executed it.

"The Spirit," says Bosch (1991:114) "is thus, further, not only the initiator and guide of mission, but also the one who empowers to mission." He is the motivating force, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). It is thus not incidental that "the intimate linking of pneumatology and mission is Luke's distinctive contribution to the early church's missionary paradigm" (Bosch 1991:114). From what we have said, it is evident that the Holy Spirit was central to the life and the mission of the Church.

3.3.3 Church in Mission: Content of its Missionary Mandate

The content of the missionary passion that characterised the ministry of Jesus Christ is summarised in Luke 4:18ff, Taylor (1964:54) maintains that it is summarised in a six-point program that included the following features:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor [rehabilitate those who are economically disinherited]; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted [rehabilitate those who are morally maladjusted]; to preach deliverance to the captives [rehabilitate those who are politically disinherited], and recovering of sight to the blind [rehabilitate the physically handicapped], to set at liberty them that are bruised [rehabilitate those who are socially disinherited], to preach the acceptable year of the Lord [the program of the kingdom was effective immediately] (Luke 4:18-19; emphasis not mine).

If Taylor's observation is valid then the centrality of God's mission is rehabilitation; rehabilitating the economically disinherited, the morally maladjusted, the physically handicapped, the politically disinherited, the socially disinherited and thus to effect the programme of the Kingdom of God.

Viewed collectively these are not only dehumanising factors but also suggest that from the beginning God had never been indifferent to human situation. His Spirit has always been engaged in preparing the day when the Kingdom of God would have been fully realised on earth.

Conditions of dehumanisation became entrenched in the nature of people from the beginning when people began to disobey God. They were further aggravated when God ceased to be part of their lives (Gen. 6:3). Then the world became corrupt and unable to help itself (Gen. 6:5,12). However, it should be borne in mind that dehumanising conditions affecting mankind were not an occasion for God's mercy. God's nature is merciful.

The content of the missionary mandate of the Church will further receive extended attention when we discuss selected dimensions of the missionary mandate of the Church involving amongst others, social, evangelistic; political, cultural and economical which constitute a holistic and comprehensive missionary mandate to the world.

3.3.4 Church in Mission: Scope of its Missionary Mandate

This section proposes that the scope of missionary mandate of the Church is based on the universality of God's love, its missionary implications, and its spirituality in

mission. By describing the scope of the missionary mandate of the Church, we hope to engage the Church in matters relating to its mission and its spirituality. It is hoped the Church will realize it needs to transcend its socio-cultural limitations imposed from outside and become distinct community of God on earth.

Frequent biblical references indicate the universality of the mandate of the Church. Donald Senior and Carol Stuhlmueller (1983) concentrated a great deal on those proof texts referring to the universality of God's mission. It is not desirable that we should reproduce the full extent of those texts here, except by way of an example. "The Lord is not willing...that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden" (Mat. 11:28); "I am the light of the world" (Joh. 8:12). "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (Joh. 4:14); and so forth. These are some among many references which bear witness to the universal scope of the mandate of the Church.

The scope of God's mandate is also explicit in the ministry of Jesus. From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus Christ had a vision of the world. He generated the same vision to his disciples. He saw "a weary, wandering, wayward world" (Taylor 1964:42) standing in need of salvation, as "sheep without a shepherd" (Mat. 9:35-38) and he willingly undertook to be its Saviour.

He did not confine himself narrowly to the wellbeing of his own race group, the Jews. Unlike Simon, the Zealot, he was not truncated into patriotic nationalistic sentiments (Shelley 1982). He died and shed his blood for the forgiveness of many. He rose from the dead and commissioned his disciples with these imperative words: "...go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you, to the very end of the age" (Mat. 28:19-20).

Taylor (1964:42) is struck by the implication of this spiritual ultimatum. He says that the "all power" reveals an unlimited supply; the "all nations" reveals an unbounded scope; the "all things" reveals an unrestricted message; the "always" reveals an unfailing fellowship. Perhaps it would be helpful, in addition to these, to consider three more factors underscoring the universality of God's mandate: the universality of God's love, the universality of sin and the universality of atonement.

3.3.4.1 The Universality of God's Love

The foregoing section briefly mentioned the universality of God's mission. We now turn our attention to the universality of God's love. The following factors bear witness to that.

Various portions of the Old Testament and New Testament reflect the universality of God's love. God's love is characterised as self-sacrificial, as the foundation of mission, and the essence of mission. Its missionary implication and the centrality of spirituality in mission will be explored.

To begin with, sufficient numbers from various portions of the Old Testament adequately confirm God's love for mankind (cf. Deut. 10:18; 33:3; I Kings 10:9; Isa. 43:4; 63:9; Psalm 89:28; 106:45; Jer. 31:3. etc.). The New Testament is also replete with references of God's love for mankind (e.g. Joh. 14:21,23; 16:27; 17:23; Eph. 6:23; I Thess. 2:16; I Joh. 3:1; 4:10, etc.).

However, nowhere is God's love for mankind more clearly expressed than in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; that whomsoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (Joh. 3:16).

God's love is the first and primary strand of world mission. Mission is the business of God's love. It is the labour of love. Salvation is performed in the context of God's love. It is the constraining love. "The love of Christ," says Paul, "constrains us. Because He died for all, therefore we should not live unto ourselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again" (II Cor. 5:13-15).

Love is the greatest commandment upon which both the Law and the prophets depend (Mat. 22:37-40). According to Mark 12:31, there is no greater law than love. Love is, therefore, of pre-eminent importance in the Bible.

The love of God being universal in its application, it follows then that "favouritism or preferential treatment does not show up in His (God's) dealings. What He offers to one He offers to all, on equal terms" (Taylor 1964:40.). His offer is awe-inspiring, "He gave His Son that whomsoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life".

This has most often been identified as self-sacrificial love. He loved the world more than His own life. He loved it in spite of its curse, finiteness, inequalities, sinfulness and wickedness (Rom. 1:18-32). One reason is as Wiley (1946) noted, that unlike that of a philanthropist's, God's love is not motivated by the worthiness of the object. He loves because of his nature. God is love (I Joh. 4:8). Love is of the essence of God (Wiley 1946:105).

God's love is the foundation and the motivation of the universality of mission. It follows from this that God's mission is indiscriminate. This is what amazes people "again and again," says Bosch (1991:28), "the inclusiveness of Jesus' mission. It embraces both the poor and the rich, both the oppressed and the oppressor, both sinners and devout. His mission is one dissolving alienation and breaking down walls of hostility, of crossing boundaries between individuals and groups". Such mission is born out of love. God "is vitally interested in the spiritual welfare of those who are unlovely, unlovable, unloving" (Taylor 1964:40.)

The fact that God loved the world is the essence of Good News, and the revolutionary one to the Jews. It is good news to have been accepted as justified by God in spite of our past, present and future, and this is a revolutionary concept to the Jews (cf. Bosch 1991).

Saying this does not border on anti-Semitism. The Old Testament salvation history is the history of God's dealings with the Jews' ancestors (Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9,12; I Kings 8:23; II Chr. 6:14; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Ps. 89:28; 106:45; Dan. 9:4, etc.). God called Abraham and thus rescued him from idol worship (Senior & Stuhlmueller 1983).

However, through Abraham God sought to reach out to the world (Gen. 12). During the course of time, through Moses God set free the Israelites from Egyptian slavery and established a covenant relationship with them (Exodus). However, during the same period God's intention to bless all the families of the world was partially eclipsed by the rising sense of the Israelites for self-determination and self-preservation (cf. (Senior & Stuhlmueller 1983).

It would, therefore, be rational for any Jew to assume that God had an exclusive covenant relationship with them. They were given the Law with its blessings and curses. They were the custodians of God's promises. This was something they treasured so much.

But now, the concept that God loved the world, not a particular nation but all nations, would not go down well with an average Jew. This is not only well illustrated in the prayer of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) but also in the Cornelius account (Acts 10).

However, the fact that God loved the world, does not exclude the Jews. "The Jews are included among all the nations," says Bosch (1991), "no longer, however, as specially privileged people". The basis of the new relationship is love and no longer the covenant of the law. God's love is all inclusive. But to sum up what we have said about God's love so far, Kane (1978) correctly stresses the fact that Jesus Christ had been teaching the love of God as no one else would have ever had done.

A. Some Missionary Implications of God's Love

Our survey has insisted on the contribution of the Old Testament and the New Testament to the understanding of God's love than Taylor (1964) and others scholars allow. Love appears to be the chief motive for God's mission or *Missio Dei*. God is himself a missionary, "for God loved the world..." (John 3:16). This is the reason why God is involved with the world. Bosch (1968:15) expresses a representative view held by most (Barth, Hartenstein, Andersen, Freytag, Dürr, etc.) when he says, "*Ten diepste is dit God self wat sendingwerk doen en nie óns nie*". "At the deepest level, it is God himself who is labouring in mission and not us" (my own translation).

Mission is birthed in God's love and God's love has some critical missionary implications. It is in the context of God's loving that "He gave His Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life". In this section, we would like to look at some missionary implication of the love motif.

The theme that most centrally embodies the mission motive logically is God's love. This teaching comes to expression extensively in some Evangelical literature. According to Green (1990:17), God's love is precisely "the supreme reason for engaging in evangelism". "We Christians," he says, "should bother [with Evangelism] because of God the Father's love. Evangelism flows from the nature of the God we worship" (:17).

Wilkins (1950:17) maintains that love is the "proper motivation for personal soul-winning". It follows thus that the Great Commission is issued in the context of God's love. "The fruit of Spirit is love" (Gal. 5:22). It is the love of Christ that "constrains us...not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again" (II Cor. 5:15).

It is love that compels us "to lay down our lives for our brothers" (I Joh. 3:16). "What the world needs," remarked Seamands (1971:5) "is love, sweet love". Love is the basis of God's redemptive action. "In this, the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him" (I Joh. 4:9).

However, Bosch (1991) points out that the theme of love was once "a powerful missionary incentive" (:286) in the missionary awakening. It sparked off "a tremendous sense of gratitude for what they [missionaries] had received and an urgent desire to share with others, both at home and abroad, the blessing so freely shed upon them" (:286). This is the time when "pagans" or "heathens" were "regarded as brothers and sisters" (:286).

Generally, "the principal theme was that of empathy and solidarity which found expression in compassion for others whose plight should evoke the Christian's tender affection as well as a yearning for both their temporal comfort and their immortal happiness" (Hutchinson quoted in Bosch 1991:286-87).

Bosch (1991:287) makes the point that "Love for Christ and people often manifested itself in a remarkable degree of commitment and dedication" exemplified by the Moravians. Zinzendorf expressed their motto as follows, "Wherever at the moment there is most to do for the Saviour, that is our home" (quoted in Bosch 1991:287). According to Blanke (quoted in Bosch 1991:287),

Moravians made it a matter of principle to go to those most deprived and marginalized. They identified with the indigenous people and lived and dressed the way they did, mostly to the utter disgust of the European colonizers. Often the fury of the colonial authorities was vented on them. During a short period span of forty years the Moravian mission among the American Indians in North America had to vacate their mission station no fewer than seventeen times, because of interference from the colonial authorities

It is pity, however, that soteriological interests often eclipsed the theme of love in missionary motivation. Heaven became the reward for missionary involvement. In one phase of their lives both "John and Charles Wesley, for instance went to the Indians in Georgia in the conviction that the arduous and lonely work among these primitive people would help the Wesleys themselves toward attaining true holiness and righteousness" (Bosch 1991:288). But the validity of this attitude lay therein that "they sensed that mission work was impossible without an element of sacrifice, self-denial, and preparedness to suffer for Christ (cf. van den Berg in Bosch 1991:288).

It is within this context that the theme of love "in actual missionary motivation, promotion and practice...turned out to be rather an ambivalent one" (Bosch 1991:286). This is as a result of the "motif of love and utter dedication" (Bosch 1991:287) being often accompanied by asceticism, which was not immediately related to mission but to the salvation of one's own soul. "The saving of souls was more important than the planting of churches...because most Christians firmly believed that without being converted to the Christian faith people would perish eternally" (Bosch 1991:288). Important that may have been, while this did halt mission activities, it certainly changed the dimension of the missionary motif – God's love. The love motive even became more ambivalent in that it was not always well understood. The missionary involvement in foreign countries was in some circles perceived as including a reparation project. Bosch (1991:288) observed.

The missionaries persisted in the pre-Enlightenment tradition of the indissoluble unity of "evangelisation and humanization (cf. van der Linde 1973), of "service to the soul" *and* "service to the body" (Nørgaard 1988), of proclaiming the gospel *and* spreading a "beneficent civilization" (Rennstich 1982). For Blumhardt of the Basel Mission this clearly included "reparation for injustice committed by Europeans, so that to some extent the thousand bleeding wounds could be healed which were caused by the Europeans since

centuries through their most dirty greediness and most cruel deceitfulness (emphasis not mine).

As a result of the degeneration of the love motif made "the views of the typical evangelicals concerning the pagan world, particularly with respect to its spiritual condition, began to vacillate between pessimism and romanticism. Soon the pessimism was the stronger sentiment" (Bosch 1991:289). By the nineteenth century, the adjective "poor" was used to qualify the noun "heathen". Since then, argues Bosch 1991:290, it

appears times without number in the literature of the period. The patent needs of the poor heathen became one of the strongest arguments in favour of mission. The glory of God as missionary motive had first been superseded by the emphasis on his love. Now there was yet another shift in motivation – from the depth of God's love to the depth of fallen humanity's pitiable state. Love had deteriorated into patronizing charity.

Consequently, the original love motive: compassion and solidarity had been replaced by pity and condescension.

However, no one had better warned the world than the Apostle Paul who said that we may do everything: "we may proclaim the most wonderful words; we may possess the most marvellous gifts; we may perform the noblest deeds. But if we do not possess and practice love, we are nothing. All is in vain" (Seamands 1971:75).

While many would go along with the suggestion of the supremacy of that love in missionary motif, the general state of affairs at present is quite disheartening. Mission is biased against political and economic ideologies and affluence. It is grounded firmly in its colonial legacy, where colonialism and mission were perceived as one thing.

Raising these issues leads us to suggest that mission is the exclusive business of the "haves", while the "have nots" are merely the recipients of the benefits of mission and not the agents thereof. The poor are thus excluded from missionary activities except in so far as they are made the objects of human compassion.

It is in this context that Bosch (1991:290) poignantly contends that "the haves were morally obliged to share their spiritual wealth with others; they and they alone were

equipped with power from on high and had help to offer to those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death”.

The situation is one in which “the pagans’ pitiable state became the dominant motive for mission, not the conviction that they were objects of the love of Christ” (Bosch 1991:290). Bosch (1991) summarises this sad state of mission affairs by contending that mission continues to exist but its original motif, love, has in all respects, been supplanted. He aptly observed,

“It is clear that, in theory as well as in practice, much of nineteenth and twentieth century missionary philanthropy remained below the measure of Paul’s being “constrained by Jesus’ love”. The purity of that motive is sullied. Its fountainhead, surely, is to be looked for in the spiritual experience of a personal encounter with the living and present Lord and in a deeply personal understanding of sin and grace; but its on the whole sound origins and genuinely Christian ingredients were unable, in the long run, to hold out against the spirit of the age (:291)

B. God’s Love and the Centrality of Spirituality in Mission

A survey of the Book of Acts and other epistles reveals that the first century Christians had emphasized the necessity of being Spirit-filled and Spirit-guided. They became aware that being Spirit-filled and Spirit-guided is God’s solution to the self-effort and self-defeating life-style. This was not less so when coming to their missionary activities.

“Christianity,” says Shelley (1982:80), “has always been a religion of the Spirit. According to the fourth Gospel Jesus had promised to his people the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, to guide them (Joh. 16:13-15)”. This promise was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

The Great Commission gave Christ’s disciples a mandate to “make disciples of all nations” (Mat. 28:19). In the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to execute the same mandate of making disciples of all nations. We have already seen that Verkuyl (1975) correctly maintains that the missionary commandment appears in

the context of Christology, whereas its execution is described in the context of pneumatology (Bosch *et al* 1980).

Roland Allen (1962) was among the first to draw attention to it. Harry Boer (1961) made an exegetical study of the subject. The missionary dimension of pneumatology was manifested in the activities of itinerant charismatic preachers who conducted an extensive “missionary programme” – especially in Asia Minor and Syria until the third century. It was evident in the daily lives of ordinary Christians.

The emphasis on the necessity of being Spirit-filled and Spirit-guided strongly indicates that God’s mission is essentially inseparable from spirituality. The messianic mission of Jesus Christ makes this assertion more evident. At his’ baptism the Spirit came upon him (Mark 1:10; “the Spirit of God” (Mat. 3:17, “the Holy Spirit.” Luke 3:21). Through the Holy Spirit Jesus Christ received God’s confirmation of his divine sonship and messianic mission (Mat. 3:13ff, par.).

Jesus went up from the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1) and after the temptation began his ministry “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14). Taking up the message of John the Baptist, Jesus proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God (Mat. 4:17; cf 3:1) – a coming marked by the presence of the Holy Spirit (Mat.12:28ff., par.) as the sign of the messianic age of salvation (Luke 4:18ff; Acts 10:38, etc.).

Not only did Jesus testify about his mission as Spirit initiated (Luke 4:18ff.) and Spirit empowered (Luke 4:1), but he also presented unmistakably the teaching regarding the Holy Spirit. The following synopses illustrate the extent to which the Holy Spirit became central to Christ and his mission. The Holy Spirit is one abiding with the disciples and they will be indwelt by the Spirit (Joh. 14:17), and, therefore, cannot be received by the world, but only by the believer (John 14:17). He is immanent and available now upon the request of the believer (Luke 11:13).

He will be another helper (Joh. 14:16). He will give a teaching ministry (Joh. 14:25-26). He will be an effectual co-witness with the believer (Joh.15:26-27). He will convict the ungodly (John 16:8-11). He will enlighten the believer (John 16:12-13). He will glory Christ (Joh. 16:14-15). Above anything else, Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5,8).

After Christ had left the world, the Holy Spirit continued with the missionary work of Jesus Christ as the helper (Joh. 14:16). In referring to the missionary dimension of the Holy Spirit Bosch (1980) points out that "The early Christians also had an awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit" (:50).

The apostles and others carried out their ministries "full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:31; 6:5; 7:54; etc.) and the Holy Spirit – identified in Acts 16:7 as the Spirit of Jesus – directed the mission of the fledgling church (Acts 9:31; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6-7). These believers, being led by the Spirit as it were, were constantly breaking new ground and therefore relied heavily on the daily activity of the Holy Spirit" (Jacobs 1983:148).

In line with this, he further noted that the missionary dimension of pneumatology was evident in the activities of itinerant charismatic preachers who conducted an extensive "missionary programme – especially in Asia Minor and Syria until the third century. It was also evident in the daily lives of ordinary Christians" (Bosch *et al.* 1980 :50).

In the context of these activities the salvific aspect of the new age practised by Jesus – the early church through the power of the Holy Spirit carried out notably healing and exorcism. The believers were built together into a dwelling place of God in the spirit (Eph. 4:22). Generally, the experience of the early church confirmed that the messianic age had indeed come and that the Church was an instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

In the light of these events we have ever had to remind ourselves that missionary theology is not only concerned with the Logos or λογος, but also with the Spirit, Πνευμα. Earlier we have said that Verkuyl (1975:154 *et seq.*) correctly maintains that the missionary commandment appears in the context of Christology (Logos), whereas its execution is described in the context of pneumatology (Spirit).

In spite of all and including a brief sketch we have presented, Bosch (1980) charges that for a long time modern theologians had failed to perceive this close connection between the Holy Spirit and the early church. The failure is as a result of the role of the Holy Spirit being limited.

Some of the areas into which the role of the Holy Spirit had been limited to include the following: (1) The inner life of the individual where the Holy Spirit was exclusively perceived as Christ operating in individual Christians in order to sanctify them; (2) Scriptural exegesis where the Holy Spirit enables the believer to understand Scripture, and (3) to "particular revelations and visions communicated directly to individual Christians, as well as ecstatic utterances and supernatural manifestations" (Bosch *et al.* 1980:50). But as far as sanctification is concerned Tippet (1987:238) says

The holy life then is not the life shut off from the world, but the life that penetrates into the world making it a better place. The fellowship withdrawing from the world is, to put it anthropologically, a spiritual mechanism, to strengthen the thrust into the world"

He adds that

"despite the deterioration of many congregations which manifest the disease of enclosure (not few in our own day), the Church at large has always disapproved of this condition and "squirms" under criticism, because it knows this behaviour does not line up with either the biblical criteria or the experience of the Church through history.

Caulley (1984) understands that such failure to perceive the close connection between the Holy Spirit and the early church had started much earlier than the modern era.

The commitment of the Church to its missionary calling during the early period was often slowed down or completely halted by being preoccupied by its own self-consciousness as the true Church of God, the Body of Christ and the fellowship of believers. As more accent fell on its selfhood, its missionary calling became eclipsed.

A case in point is the early assumptions on the nature of the Church we have been discussing. When the Church seeks to preserve itself from the contamination of the world, its missionary calling suffers. In its urge for self-preservation, time was devoted to the reconstruction of the true doctrine by bringing forth the material of theology.

However, such behaviour could not have been without a cause. Sometimes the church had to be forced into a situation of this kind when it contended with paganism from without and repeated heresies from within (Wiley 1946). These forces from without and from within the church itself compelled it to redefine itself but not without the expense of its missionary calling.

It had to seal its testimony sometimes by the shedding of blood (Shelley 1982). The persecution of the Church in some provinces of the Roman Empire was a catastrophic period in the ministry of the Church (Shelley 1982). To purify itself and its doctrine the Church had to go analogically through a baptism of fire.

However, no other forces posed greater danger than those from within the Church itself. Outside forces against the Church tended to unite it. During persecution, the Church was united. However, forces from within its ranks tended to divide it.

Bosch (1980) identifies at least five interpretations of the gospel, which posed a threat to the church. Among these is Greek Philosophy, which was thought to have prepared the way for Christ, this being itself a positive evaluation of pagan religions. Some interpretations of the Gospel saw similarities between the Christian Gospel and the mystery religions, especially those mystery religions found from Persia in the East to Rome in the West – Manichaeism in the east, perhaps being the chief one.

The gospel was also perceived in terms of Gnosticism, which held that salvation meant being saved from the material world to live as a pure spiritual being. The last two interpretations are Ebionism and Montanism. The former held that Judaism with its codes was a true way to eternal salvation. The latter was a mixture of paganism with the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

In response to these and others, the church did not hesitate to repudiate them as heresies. For this reason the Patristic and Medieval theology are often thought of as the theology of the “defenders of the faith” (Wiley 1946:31). To them, theology was a sacred business of heart and life. Bosch (1980) saw the effort of the Church in combating these movements as a matter deserving our appreciation. He says:

Yet we should be grateful that the church combated these movements. It would have in its (short-term) interests to have collaborated wholeheartedly with Greek philosophy, the mystery religions or Gnosticism, for it might have expanded much faster if it had done so. But the church fathers felt that this would have entailed the sacrifice of certain basic elements of the gospel. Three such elements were: (1) the canonicity of the Old Testament; (2) the historicity of Jesus, (3) the reality of the resurrection (1980:44).

Wiley (1946) noted that it was during the same early period that "all but one of the seven Ecumenical Councils was called to consider matters of doctrine" (:32). It is evident that during this period the focus shifted naturally from missionary involvement with the world to being preoccupied with its own survival and purity (Bosch *et al.* 1980).

Later the dichotomy between clergy and laity became formalised, and the laity were gradually relegated as recipients of mission instead of being agents of it. Above all, the church and mission "came to be seen as two separate, even opposing entities" (Bosch *et al.* 1980:44).

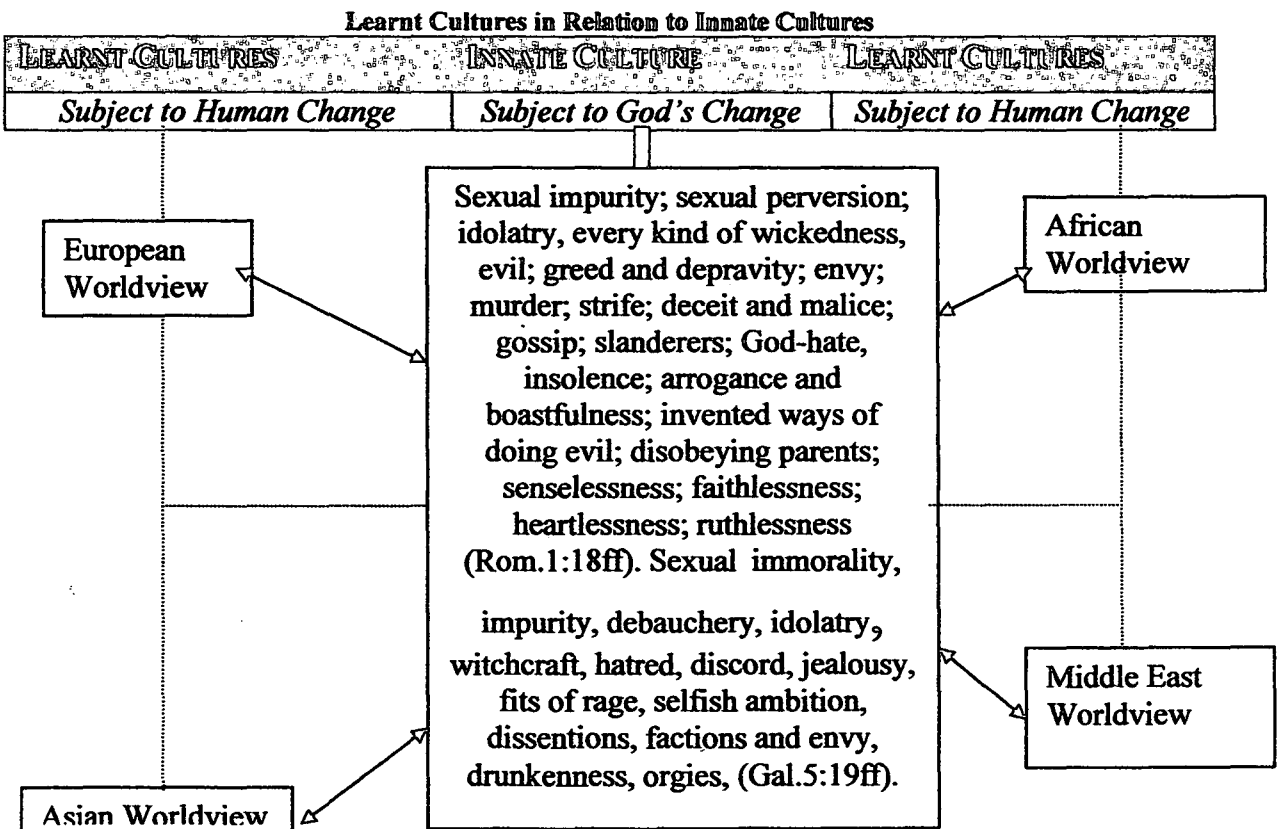
C. Preliminary Evaluation

The Church does not only have a message to bear, but also to spread it to the world through love (Eph. 4:15). We have briefly explored the scope of the missionary mandate of the Church through describing the universality of God's love, its missionary implication and its spirituality in mission. It has been demonstrated that the Scriptures support the universality of God's mandate based on the universality of God's love. Mission based on God's love implies that not only our personalities are engaged in mission but also the form of our attitudes. This is where spirituality in mission becomes important. Mission can only be carried and advanced by God's transformed people. Disciples were first transformed themselves before carrying on with mission. Mission springs naturally from the sanctified and transformed heart. There it is at home.

The Church should avoid Sceva's tradition, one of engaging in God's mission without being transformed (Acts 19). Without transformation, agents of mission alienate its purpose and mission is hijacked to advance the cause of ideologies. Christianised Christianity will help the Church in mission order its ways and practices to bear positive witness to the indigenous people of South Africa. In the next section we will continue to expand our investigation on the scope of the missionary mandate of the Church by examining the universality of atonement.

3.3.4.2 The Universality of Sin

The universality of God's missionary mandate is not only an occasion of the nature of God but it is also preceded by the universality of sin. Sin is universal but contextual in its practice. Perhaps this clears up so much of the confusion between universal gospel and contextual gospel. The fact is that humanity lives in what one could call, for the sake of clarity, two cultures. One is our culture, and the other is the culture inherent in all of us, regardless the fact that we are Africans, Asians, Europeans, or somewhere from the Middle East. This culture is inherent. The former, which is our culture is learnt and the latter innate. God is not concerned about the former. He is not concerned that one is a Sotho, Afrikaner, Xhosa, etc. Moreover, one can always change their learnt cultures or abandon it, or civilise it. For instance, many Africans, especially those abroad do not know African cultures and their life-styles. Some speak the languages of the countries they live in and do not know any of the African indigenous languages. Learnt cultures can be changed. In addition to that, learnt cultures are not universal, but contextual or regional. But the innate culture, no one can change. It cannot be abandoned, or civilised. It is universal. It can only be changed by God. Perhaps we can clarify this by means of a diagram.



This is what the Bible means about all having sinned (Rom. 3:23). The statement is cast in universal form. There is hardly a nation that could claim exemption from innate culture as typified above; all are subject to innate cultures in spite of the progress made in science and socio-political areas. The difference between nations is the level of progress made in an attempt to move away from innate culture. While some nations have not moved away significantly from an innate culture, others have not broken away from it.

However, the arrows between cultures mean that learnt cultures are often informed by innate culture. Moreover, learnt cultures are mainly human attempts to move away from innate culture and use religion (e.g. ATR, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity⁴⁵, etc.) and policies, such as human rights, women rights, children's' rights, etc., to move away from innate cultures. However, these policies and others are good and well meant. But they are being undermined by human beings' disposition toward innate cultures. For example, in spite of the fact that human rights are more a half a century old, the violation of human right is still a thorny issue in our time (cf. van der Walt 2003). Just as the arrows indicate, modern life is an indefinite to-and-fro exercise between learnt cultures and innate culture, with no end in sight.

Historically, mission during colonialism focussed much on learnt cultures but less on innate cultures. Indeed, much success was made in westernising Africans. An innate culture is often the one which missionaries often projected upon African learnt cultures. God deals with innate culture through atonement, which is the subject of our next section.

3.3.4.3 The Universality of Atonement

While we cannot go into detail here about the subject of atonement, a few observations are necessary. In describing God's atonement, this section holds an optimistic view of the world. God has reconciled himself with the world. Atonement is the essence of the goal of mission.

⁴⁵ We hold the view that Christianity at the level of religion is no better off than all other religions of the world, including ATR. The problem is that Christianity can be made a religion. This is the case in the sphere of interreligious dialogue. For an extended comparison between the Christian faith and religion, Seamands (1982) paints an excellent picture.

A. God's Universal Atonement

Atonement is a central subject in the Scriptures and in Christian theology. According to Colin Gunton (1988:2),

Atonement is the portmanteau word used in English to denote the reconciliation between God and the world, which is the heart of Christian teaching...It is a part of theology which is inseparably connected with life in the church and in the world, and therefore cannot be theory (emphasis not mine.)

In its scope, atonement comprises forgiveness, justification by faith, regeneration and sanctification. Although "the most uncontrollable and unchanging thing on earth is the base element in human nature" (Taylor 1964:41), yet the motive of the atonement is equally found in the love of God (Joh. 3:16). God loved the world and gave his Son not because the world was such in great need, but that God is love. However, what concerns us in this section now is the breadth of the atonement. It is universal for the simple reason that the cosmic adaptability of the gospel to human need is observed in such references as these: "He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12); "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that comes unto God by him" (Heb. 7:35); "The gospel...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). These Scriptures and others underlie not only the universality of atonement but also its inclusiveness. To this extent, Taylor (1964:41) could say,

Regardless of the personality type, or the hereditary background, or the downgrading influences of an environment, there is one power that can counteract the destructive forces of these elements – the gospel of Christ. It can handle in a universal scale that which cannot otherwise be handled.

At the same time the gospel of Christ being "the power that can counteract the destructive forces" suggests that, despite prevailing and varying conditions in the world, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is premised not on pessimistic overtures about the world but on optimistic ones.

The fact that "though advancements may be made in science, medicine, and standard of living, still the sinfulness of human beings remain the same through the centuries"

(Taylor 1964:41), cannot be truer. However, a human being is redeemable. The chance for a change for the better is based on the authority of the declaration that there is a "Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9).

B. Atonement and Mission Crisis in South Africa

The crisis of mission in South Africa today, centres on theology and not on evangelism. Much more emphasis is laid on theology than on evangelism. We therefore, talk about classical theology, liberation theology, African theology, Protestant theology, contextual theology, cultural theology, Church theology, State theology, Prophetic theology, grassroots theology, Black theology, feminist theology, etc.

These are good. They serve as an indication that the Church takes its missionary mandate with the seriousness it deserves. Owing to immaturity, talks about these theologies have often divided scholars along the lines of tribal, political, racial and cultural interests. Today, we talk also about State Theology, Church Theology and Prophetic Theology and play around with words as if; these were not academic exercises (de Gruchy 1979).

This suggests that other theologies were merely academic products. Judging these works of theology with this level of attitudes betrays our understanding of mission. After all, we should not lose sight of the fact that the names imposed on these theologies are merely labels of our own attitudes toward ourselves and towards others. The question we should have raised in consideration of these theologies is whether they had fulfilled their mission, or rather served their purpose, or are all doing so. In other words, will ordinary South African notice anything at all if all these theologies were to be dismantled?

What about the Church itself? In our view, the present crisis in mission is a theological problem in that the aggregate concern of some scholars, as many as they are, on the issues raised above, amounts to nothing other than seeking to find out who is to blame for the misery of indigenous people in South Africa, and apportion blame appropriately; on the other hand, who is to be commended for the well being of indigenous people. Who is to blame for colonialism? Who is to blame for oppression? Who is to blame for

poverty? Who is to blame for racism? Who is to blame for tribalism? Who is to blame for violence, etc.

Some of these have become theologies of excuses. Our theologies try their best to avoid fundamental questions about human lives, more so if the problem is a supernatural one, such as the problem of sin. Supernatural problems need supernatural means to solve them. Then human problem on earth is a supernatural one; passing on classified information in an attempt to deal with the consequences of sin on the ground is not adequate. Human being needs God.

Indeed, if there is anything to say about emerging theologies in South Africa, the story of Jesus and the man born blind (Let us assume indigenous people of South Africa) in John 9 comes into the picture. "*Rabbi*," said the disciples of Jesus (Let us assume Orthodox Theology, Black Theology, Feminist theology, State theology, church theology, prophetic theology, third world theologies, liberation theologies, African theologies, etc), "*who sinned, this man (indigenous people in South Africa), or his parents (colonialism, apartheid, traditionalism, tribalism, racism, sexism, patriachalism, feminism, poverty, ethnicism, exploitation, oppression, capitalism, communism, etc.), that he was born blind*"? In reply, Jesus said, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned...but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life". Do our theologies prove to be the work of God? Do they impact positively on human life?

3.3.5 Preliminary Evaluation

It was the purpose of this section to argue that the Church has an unalienable and comprehensive or all-inclusive mandate to the world. We argued at length that before embarking on its commissioned mission activity, the Church must first be the Church (cf. Mosoma 1991); and that implies largely that the Church should rediscover its nature in order to be effective in mission. This was the subject handled in section 3.2. To sustain this topic a brief review was made of some early assumptions on the nature of the Church, and from most of these we pointed out that the Church defined its nature in terms that reflected an intense desire to preserve itself and its doctrine.

The mood was one of vertical orientation while the mandate is horizontally oriented. But we also gathered that it is not sufficient to reflect on the nature of the Church without having paid attention to the motive of mission. We then considered and highlighted the centrality of the biblical spirituality in mission, and the contemporary crisis in mission. We have said that the contemporary crisis in mission is more theological while God's mandate is faultless.

However, if we were to consider the implication of what has been said, the following factors would deserve mentioning: The Church's mandate is a delegated task and the bulk of the church's task is not to manufacture but to announce the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world.

But before announcing the Good News to others, the Good News has to be the good news first to the Church itself. We have argued that the Good News essentially consists of what God has done for humanity in Christ. "In other words," says Karel August (2000:61), "the essence of the Biblical message is that God has set man free in Jesus Christ of all conditions that threaten to dehumanise humankind".

In Christ God has reconciled the world to himself. In him sin has been dealt a fatal blow. But the question would perhaps arise, why would the peoples of the world then consider that the Good News? Carter and Hunt (1983:663) answer this question unerringly when they say

The world of Christ's day was ready for the universal Christian mission as no age of mankind had ever been before. There was a universal consciousness of the need of a Saviour. All humanistic endeavours to save mankind had proven inadequate and thus man possessed no hope of salvation. There was never a time in the history of the race when the world was more nearly ready to hear the message of universal salvation than at the appearance of Christ and the apostles. There was a general expectancy of the imminent appearing of a world Saviour. Paul revealed his grasp of this world need that was met by Christianity in his utterance to the Galatians: "When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son" (Gal. 4:4).

By this Carter and Hunt (1983) suggest that conditions in the world made the people realize they were incapable of saving themselves and, therefore, hearing that God has met the needs of humanity in Christ became the source of Good News. The world failed

to save itself because of the realization of being choked by the sense of guilty and that of living below its potential.

Hearing that it is not through our own human efforts that we deserved the favour of God, takes away the weariness and burden of the human soul to seek after God: rather, God sought us (cf. Mat. 11:28). It gives rise to factors bringing peace and tranquillity with God and humanity. The challenge, however, remains our abandoning of our efforts towards self-righteousness and self-justification and accepting the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:17). But that does not come without acknowledging our insignificance and our failures. We should also beware that we must not deceive ourselves by being too optimistic that the progression of science and technology would one day usher the whole world into Utopia, and that all we need is to be patient until such a time comes.

We should do well to accept science as a gift from God to humanity, and we should use it. But we should also be careful when we think that science could replace God, and/or could fulfil fundamental human needs. In the same breath, we should be observant about world ideologies, whether they were political or cultural, etc. The Apostles realised that nothing under the sun could save mankind (Act 4:12).

By laying more emphasis on announcing the Good News we should not convey the sense that such an act does not take into account the context in which this news is proclaimed. We are of the view that the lines between the proclamation of the Gospel and contextualization⁴⁶ should not be too thickly drawn since we do contextualise as we proclaim.

This has to do with our methodology. For instance, the Good News is first and foremost the good news to the poor, to the prisoner and to the blind (Luk. 4:18ff). By so doing Jesus taught the world that his priority in whatever distressing situations is a person. It is not being preoccupied by the need to change a situation, but to rescue a person. Person drowning into the river needs be rescued not the river stop flowing. It is not to demolish the prison barracks, but to set a prisoner free from the prison barracks.

⁴⁶ Third World Theologians separate thickly between *kerygma* and contextualization and do so to the point where they would separate and divorce the two. For instance, in whatever distressing situation "the starting point of (contextual) theology is not and cannot be the Bible-in-itself or some revealed truth as such, but is rather the objective historical situation of oppression and dependence" (Maimela 1987:81, also Kekana 1988).

Perhaps by way of illustration, the use of contextualization in Third World Countries may forever serve a practical example. Most of these countries were formally colonised and indigenous people suffered and many were exploited, oppressed and impoverished.

However, in the effort to gain freedom, the priority became one of replacing colonial governments by indigenous ones; in other words, change the context in which oppression and injustice prevail through political activism. This seemed to be a good idea. Indeed the context changed, indigenous ones replaced many colonial governments; but poverty, injustice, crime and other severe conditions, which characterised life under colonial rule, still persist although the context has long been changed⁴⁷.

Methodologies *qua* methodologies in themselves amount to no more than ideas, especially if held as an end in themselves. Humanity, in the final analysis need a Saviour and will be saved not by a method but by the Person. Now the question remaining for many of us to answer is whether present conditions characterising some Third World Countries emerged as a consequence of colonization or of thickly separating between orthodox theology and contextualization⁴⁸ or both in addition to other factors.

Persistent conditions in most Third World Countries: genocide, militarism, war, fraud, refugee crisis, scarcity of food and medical crisis should then serve to humble us. The Church in mission should do well to heed the words of the prophet: "if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chr. 7:14). It is the 7:14 methods that the world needs today.

Having had said that, it will be extremely pharisaical to believe that modern humanity does not have a universal consciousness of the need of a Saviour. Humanity, modern or ancient, forever, needs God. This is in spite of apparent success of some elements of humanisation with its incessant passion to use science to control the future and relegate the consciousness of the need of the Saviour to the periphery.

⁴⁷ At the time of writing this study the political situation in Zimbabwean had reached a critical stage and not less in Sudan; the Rwandese genocide still paints a ghastly remembrance;

⁴⁸ This should not amount to what Nürnberger 1994:50) calls "An unholy war between right-wing Evangelicals and left-wing Liberation Theologians".

The mood is one of struggling to divert the attention of the poor from their fundamental, existential consciousness of the need of a Saviour in order to gain more control over their wills⁴⁹. It is basically an unhealthy process that of manipulating the needs of the poor along ideological interests.

However, humanisation, in spite of its seemingly brain power, is a long *cul-de-sac* which has up to now deceived those walking in it as the right route to a brighter future. It is the task of the Church to unmask these ideologies and expose their limitations and their weakness in saving the lost humanity lest they become easy idols.

3.6 Summary and Evaluation

This chapter has partially answered the question, *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa*. We can summarise our partial answer by noting the following factors.

- We have said that the Church needs to rediscover itself in order to perform its mission. The Church needs to rediscover itself because there is apparent growing crisis on the nature of the Church, and to that extent we concentrated on the nature of the Church trying to understand it from various approaches. This means that rediscovery of the mission of the Church should not obscure or neglect its nature. Emerging contextual theologies have partially succeeded in understanding the nature of the Church. In the view of these theologies, the Church is reduced to nothing more than a racial institution and a colonial institution. Describing the Church in these terms and similar others, is calculated not to revive but to frustrate its missionary calling. The whole endeavour was motivated by the concept, "Who we are and who we are willing to become for the sake of the gospel determine, to a large measure, what we will be able to accomplish". Based on these words, the effectiveness of the Church in mission, in carrying out its missionary mandate depends on its nature. For this reason the

⁴⁹ This is Michiavellianism, which Webster defines as "...the view that politics is amoral and that any means, however unscrupulous, can justifiably used in achieving...power"

Church should try to understand what does it mean to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. It is quite remarkable that van Engen (1991:68) understand the marks of the Church in terms of a force. "First," he says, "the one Church of Jesus Christ would be seen as a unifying force...Second, the holy Church of Jesus Christ would be seen as a sanctifying force...Third, the catholic Church of Jesus Christ would be seen as a reconciling force...Fourth the apostolic Church of Jesus Christ would be seen as a proclaiming force". If the Church renews itself through conversion that new values shape its behaviour and thoughts, in terms of these marks, then it will be able to bear positive witness to the world

- The underlying assumptions of this chapter clearly emerged during discussion, and that is, Christ, not the Church, is transforming the world through his people - the Church and that the Church by itself has no inherent powers in itself to transform the world. "Apart from me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Therefore, the Church cannot perform its mission in isolation from the living and the ever-presence Christ. God has entered the history of humanity and reveals himself. History is thus not only a sphere of human activity but also of God's activity. To this extent emphasis was made on the role of the Holy Spirit. We have pointed out that the missionary commandment appears in the context of Christology, whereas its execution is described in the context of the Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit in mission thus needs to be revisited

In the next chapter, we shall continue to elaborate on the nature of the Church with reference to its missionary mandate. We shall characterise the mandate of the Church with reference to its social mandate, evangelism mandate, political mandate, cultural mandate and economic mandate.

CHAPTER 4

Church in Mission: Dimensions of the Missionary Mandate

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter attempted to explain the nature of the Church and its missionary mandate to the world. Critical issues were raised and addressed on the nature of the Church, and among these is the whole fact that the Church has to be the Church before embarking on its missionary mandate. This was part of an attempt to answer the question, *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa.*

We argued that the Church has to rediscover itself in order to rediscover and perform its mission. We do not claim that enough was said on the nature of the Church, especially if we bear in mind that the Church is dynamic and usually takes after the changing environment in which it finds itself.

Obviously some of the issues raised are beyond the scope of this research. But there are critical markers of the Church, which are constant, invariable and consistent with its nature. We have explored four of these, which are: the church is one, the church is holy, the church is catholic and the church is apostolic. Secondly we mentioned that the Church has an inexhaustive missionary mandate to the world and also tried to stress its universality on the basis of God's love and God's atonement.

This chapter continues to examine the missionary mandate of the Church with reference to some of its missionary dimensions. We intend to move through this chapter in the following manner: Section 4.2 explores the social dimension of the mandate of the Church in mission and this implies that mankind is to live in this world in social relationships and in harmony and peace. The critical question which will seek to be answered by this section is, how the Church in mission could order its ways and

practices to promote social relationships characterised by harmony and peace. Generally, in this section we will be probing the relevancy of the Gospel in modern society since concerns have been raised already that the South African religious situation might change during the next few decades as South Africa rejoins the world, and as the acids of modernity bite more deeply into our society.

We will also be raising concerns that the Church in mission is living in a time of great moral confusion in which it faces the potential encroachment of the evils of the day into its sacred precincts. While attempting to develop the theme of this section, we will also be evaluating the three types of theologies identified in the *Kairos Document* (1986) "suggested" as methods of social involvement: the State theology, the Church theology and the Prophetic or radical theology, to see the contribution they make in helping the Church carry out its missionary mandate.

Section 4.3 surveys the evangelistic dimension of the Church in mission. Perhaps this is where the Church has spent most of its ammunition on this dimension of the mandate, but the question is, has evangelism made a difference at all at least in Africa or in South Africa in particular? Several approaches will be discussed in addressing this theme. Although Evangelism is an important aspect of mission, we will be pointing out that it is only one aspect of evangelisation.

This means that evangelisation is broader than evangelism. The essence of evangelism will be considered and what the present involvement of the Church is in evangelising indigenous people in South Africa will be examined. These will be considered against the background of the following variables, viz, the Church as the witness of the Gospel and the Church as the carrier of the Good News. Both will not be discussed in isolation of the history of mission strategy, which from time to time dictated how the Church should carry out its missionary mandate in different contexts.

We will then move on to section 4.4 to consider the political dimension of the Church in mission to examine why the political dimension of the missionary mandate of the Church has not fairly been developed. Under this theme we will also be arguing that social involvement is inescapably political involvement and that the Church lives and performs its missionary mandate in the political sphere. For that reason we will also be pointing out that it is impossible to remain neutral and non-involvement concerning

politics and accept that politics and evangelism frequently rub shoulders. In the same breath, argue that the matter between political involvement and evangelism involvement on the part of the Church is one of priority and not of substance or choosing the one against the other. To assist us to understand this dimension, factors from history will also come to play in this section.

Thereafter we will then move to section 4.5 to investigate the cultural dimension of the Church in mission and how the Church in mission could put its beliefs in practice in terms of cultural diversities. We will be pointing out that the Church has declared itself in terms of its cultural mandate and will seek to determine its implication today taking into account constant cultural factors precipitating divisions among indigenous people of South Africa as well as suggesting the direction in which Christians should be moving to bear credible witness to the Gospel of Christ.

Finally, section 4.6 comments on the economic dimension of the mandate of the Church in mission. There we will be arguing that the Scriptures support the view that the economic progress of any nation is dependent on the moral strength of its citizens. Taken separately or together, these dimensions do not call for diversified responses to the world but are just some of the major strands of a single cord, the missionary mandate of the Church.

The motive that directed the research of the Church in mission in terms of the dimensions of the mandate of the Church in mission grew out of my concern to discover the relevancy of the Church in the 21st century. I sought to know whether conditions that gave rise to God's mission still existed and if they did, to ascertain what or how much could be done in order to capacitate the Church in mission to make a difference in places of its ministry. This is in line with the question, *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa.*

We know for a fact that the overall goal of the Great Commission is that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In that context, we wish to determine how the Church in mission will order its ways and practices to align itself to the objectives of God's will in terms of the social, evangelistic, political, cultural, and economic dimensions of its mandate.

The data used in this chapter largely emerge from critically reviewing relevant sources with the aim of understanding the role of the Church in mission in the wake of indigenous religious trends. The overall thesis of this chapter is that the Church in mission has a relevant ministry to the needs of the world. Having had stated that, it is now in order to investigate each dimension of the missionary mandate of Church in mission, beginning with the social dimension.

4.2 The Church in Mission and its Social Mandate

We have already suggested that the Church has been given an inexhaustive and comprehensive divine mandate to the world the major dimensions of which comprise, *inter alia*, social, evangelistic, political involvement and cultural and economic concerns. In this section, the social mandate of the Church to the world is discussed.

Chronologically, it appears that the social mandate was given first. This implies that mankind is to live in this world in harmony and peace in social relationships (Wiley 1946). The social mandate is primarily because mankind lives in a hostile relationship with one another and this is apparent from the fact that history bear witness to this. The world in which we live is full of conflicts. There are still homeless people and are refugees from the countries of their birth even in the age that most could describe as one of progress and consolidation. This should be a theological concern and not only had something left to prospective ideologies.

However, in our study, at least two important poles govern the social mandate of the Church as far as the mission of the Church is concerned: the Church and the aspect of social concern, and the Church and the aspect of social tension, both of which naturally result in social action. Let us first consider the Church in mission and social concern.

4.2.1 The Church in Mission and Social Concern

By the Church in Mission and Social Concern, we mean that first and foremost God is actively involved in the history of humanity and, therefore, that the Church can no longer stand on the periphery in the hope that social problems will sort out themselves in the course of time while the Church is engaged in prayer ministry

Time itself is not magic and it is not a saviour. Thinking that time solves problems will indicate our strong belief in evolution whether evolution is true or not. That is not in God's nature. God is the God who acts – He creates and sustains and the Bible is in itself the history of God's involvement with the world.

The social dimension of the missionary mandate of the Church is underlined in Lk. 4:18-19 where the Spirit of the Lord anointed Jesus Christ "to preach the gospel to the poor....to heal the broken-hearted ...to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind ...to set at liberty them that are bruised and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord". This is the essence of the missionary mandate of the Church. But it has to be unpacked.

The fact is both the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind and the bruised are the product of society, generated by society; and they are "the result of actual and particular sins" (Hinchliff 1982:166). It is to such as these that Christ was sent. He was not sent to address religious problems. He never said anything about Jewish religion and other world religions worth to be noted, but was concerned about the poor, the broken hearted, the captives, the blind and the bruised.

However, God's involvement with people does not only arise from the apparent social evils, collective moral bankruptcy, and the inability of society to transform itself, but also from the fact that God is love, and God is the Supreme Ruler of the universe who wants to build the true moral kingdom of love and peace on earth. Any human being, regardless of their nature, could be driven to be involved with the affairs of humanity, especially when there is a need. However, God acts not out of compassion only but also from his nature as God. What is implied above makes God unique and unparalleled.

Having established the fact that God is actively involved with the world, the issue, as August (2000:65) now puts it, becomes how the Church, as the body and the image of Christ, should reflect God's concern through its involvement in social matters. He says:

The issue of Christian social involvement is no more whether the church should become involved in society, but how and where it should become involved. It is important to note, therefore, that the focus of such Christian action is to meet people at their point of need in the same manner as demonstrated by Jesus Christ in the Gospel narratives

Concerns as to how and where the Church should become involved are crucial ones and we shall have more to say in the subsequent chapters. Indeed, it is difficult to answer, how the Church should become involved in society. Divergent approaches come to the fore – should it become involved through political activism, moral activism, economic activism, religious activism, etc?

Perhaps it is worthwhile first to consider a few reasons why the Church should become involved in social concern before attempting to explore how. Reasons why the Church should become socially concerned are multiple and, for our purpose, we shall select the following for scrutiny: social moral issues, the relevancy of the Gospel and the urgency of the Great Commission.

4.2.1.1 Social Concern because of Moral Issues

The Church in mission is living in a day of great moral crisis and confusion in which it faces the potential encroachment of the evils of the day into its sacred precincts. The world around the Church is openly hostile to God and his people. If the Apostle Paul's description of the world was anything to go by, the Church would anticipate that the people they are to minister

have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil, they disobey their parents, they are senseless, faithless, heartless, and ruthless. Although they know God's righteousness decrees that those who do such things

deserve death, they do not only continue to do those very things but also approve of those who practise them (Rom. 1:29-32).

However, the Scriptures often do not raise the question of immorality only in the world, but also in the Church itself. Indeed, numerous scriptures raise the question of immorality in the Church and several Christian communities in the New Testament are urged to desist from acts of immorality ranging from divisions within the Church (I Cor. 1:11ff) faction fighting (Gal. 5:19-21), to immorality (I Cor. 5); and the Church is urged to purge itself from these impurities (II Cor. 7:1ff). In this context the scriptures play a prophetic role to the Church itself.

But in listing some immoral practices in which the Church sometimes shares a great deal, no catalogue, however inclusive, can hope to encompass forms of evil throughout the world, such as disregard of the sanctity of human life, marriage and divorce; genetic engineering that promotes social injustice; disregard of the dignity of persons, or human embryonic stem cell research and other medical/scientific endeavours that destroy human life after conception, as well as human cloning.

Time will not allow us engage these issues in a study of this magnitude save for us to say that the Church in mission should be alerted that it has a moral mission unto itself and to the world. The Church was supposed to be the custodian of morality (Cook 1983). It was supposed to "condemn evil in the world and to proclaim the Good News of God" (Cook 1983:61). But it is itself caught up in the moral maze characterising the world and has lost moral standing in regard to its mission. This is also evident from the silent approach the Church has chosen in regard to its ministry to the world. The silence of the church in the face of social injustice has become disquieting. It is true that many people are murdered not only because of evil people who inhabit the earth but also because of many good people who are silent. Generally, it would seem more than ever that there is a need for re-Christianization of the Church than evangelisation of the world.

The issues raised above are critical and complex and may result in fierce debates. In view of their complexity, Russell De Long was prompted to write about the *Illnesses of the Modern Soul* (1965) evidenced by immorality. He argues to the effect that

In spite of all our invented conveniences, the modern soul is sick. This malady is seriously affecting the body and weakening the mind...Modern man is living at a fast tempo. This, coupled with ruthless dissipation, is resulting in mental, moral, and physical breakdown on a distressingly universal scale (1965:15)

For De Long (1965) the issues thus raised above, amount to nothing less than symptoms of the sickness of the human soul. The illness of the modern soul is characterised by various forms of idolatry. Human beings have the ability and the amazing skill to organize society, to set up governments, social systems, economic systems and institutions to maintain social justice. These institutions are very beneficial when in their right places. Nevertheless, the main focus of these institutions and many similar others should be of service to humanity rather than idols to be worshipped. The worship of these institutions contributes greatly to moral decline and moral crisis in society.

It is therefore the task of the Church in mission to unmask and expose the true focus of these institutions, provided that it has regained some ground on moral renovation itself. Modern institutions if left unchecked, quickly assume the tendency of divinity, resulting in human beings being sacrificed on the altars to serve the needs of these institutions. When and wherever this happens, God has been substituted and these institutions, initially meant to enhance service to humanity, have become the end in themselves.

It is in the context of tendencies such as these that the Prophet Jeremiah was commissioned by Yahwe "over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" (1:10). The same mandate has not been lifted on the part of the Church.

The social mandate is thus given because humanity is marred by sin, which constitutes a base element in human beings, which in spite of contemporary marvellous advancements in science and technology, remains unchanged until this day. Perhaps Nees (1996:23) is correct to have observed, "The great failure of modern society is technology and education without morality". Rom. 1:18-32 and elsewhere paints a sordid picture of humanity being largely overtaken by anti-social behaviour where the base element in human beings has taken over.

The consequences are obvious: human beings have lost sight of the concept of community and have become self-conscious. Heavy commitment today is made to the

primacy and freedom of the individual person, even at the expense of community values, and this itself is the fruit of secular humanism, hedonism as well as narcissism

4.2.1.2 Social Concern because of the Relevancy of the Gospel

In spite of strides made in the modern world in terms of commitment to the development of social life, history is witnessing moral degeneration in society. The media continue to paint ghastly picture of the society of which we are members. However, the picture is not different from one that had been painted by the Apostle Paul in the epistle to the Romans (1:18-32) about two millennia ago. Like the ship without the anchor so has the society has become without God.

Human behaviour is graphically portrayed and is blamed on account of the fall of mankind from the grace of God. In this context then the media simply confirm what the Bible has said centuries ago, proving once again that the world has not changed. However, the media are simply committed to reflecting problems of society and at the same time their own inability to come up with a solution.

The basic assumption largely operating in modern institutions is one of naturalistic⁵⁰ tendencies where it is often held that the world does not need a Saviour, as held by Scripture, but needs change for the better only by means of classified information.

However, we do not underestimate the importance of information. Information can help a great deal to make anyone understand the gravity of the situation in which we are, but like any other thing, understanding the situation does not necessarily make any difference worthwhile talking about. The apostles of Christ realised this when they said, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). In the light of this, political reform is not sufficient.

We are saying that the basis of social concern on the part of the Church is due to the relevancy of its message, the Gospel of Christ. "The Gospel... is the power of God for

⁵⁰ The belief that by thinking about nature it is possible to discern certain moral truths (cf. Cook 1983)

the salvation of everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). The Gospel is the gospel of salvation and biblical salvation is salvation from sin. The angel confirmed this by saying, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name of Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Mat. 1:21).

From the biblical point of view then sin is the cause of moral bankruptcy, and the implication is clear that "his people" cannot save themselves from sin and its effects. In this context, the angel's words, "Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord," (Luk. 2:11) must have been Good News indeed.

The relevancy of the Gospel in this context is salvation. Salvation is God's work. It follows then that those who believed should in turn evidence this salvation to others by means of their redeemed lives. Their redeemed lives must be characterised by moral uprightness, positive social relationships, harmony and peace. This peace is God's peace resulting from cessation from striving to save ourselves from sin and relying completely upon his work accomplished in Christ for us on the cross.

The relevancy of the message of the Gospel, as we have just seen, is the basic motivation for social concern. This also arises from the assumption that the Church is aware of the extent of human problem, its cause and misery; but it does not know either the cure or the answer, other than the Saviour, the Person, Jesus Christ who is himself the cure.

The Church knows that fundamental to the human problem is the fact of sin. "...Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Then the question is how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to communicate the relevancy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to indigenous people in South Africa.

This is not a question demanding a simple answer. But one suggestion should suffice here: the early Christian community allowed Christ to lead. Let him lead. The early Christian community were aware of his presence and that he knew the way, only if they let him lead in their lives. This is inferred from the fact that most of them were ordinary men and women who had little education.

Otherwise, we could have easily counted their success in mission on education, had these words not come to the surface, "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). These were simply ordinary men doing extraordinary things.

However, in addition, the Church needs to move from terminal thinking where it does not relate its knowledge of the Gospel to any ultimate objective of its life, be it to glorify God or to bear witness to the world, to relational thinking where it could relate the knowledge of the Gospel and activities to an objective of its life. Further, to this the Church in mission should study the dispensation most indigenous people are in, in South Africa. We should be wary of taking it for granted that all people are in the same dispensation.

The relevancy of the message of the Gospel also implies that the Church is not there for its own purpose, but for the world. It is neither there for its own programmes and its well being, but is called for the purposes of serving the world by ministering the Gospel of Christ.

It follows then that in seeking to maintain its distinctiveness, the Church should not forget that its main task is not to save itself but to be engaged with the world through the Gospel of Christ. The world is religious; the world is political; the world is cultural and the world is economic, etc. It is the task of the Church to be creatively engaged with all these dimensions of the world.

4.2.1.3 Social Concern: the Urgency of the Great Commission

The Great Commission (Mat. 28:19-20, and elsewhere) was given with a sense of urgency. The challenge raised in this section is to probe whether there are still conditions that warrant the necessity of the Great Commission. This question arises from the fact that the Church has become conscious of religious pluralism where answers to problems seem obvious.

By way of example, indigenous people in South Africa are religious. There is as much truth in African Traditional Religion as may be found in other religions. They are keen worshippers of ancestral spirits, it works best for them, and that is why they retain this custom.

Indeed the question of religious pluralism has been debated since the Vancouver WCC Conference and we are not planning to resuscitate the debate in this section. Nevertheless, we have made it clear that the overall thesis of this chapter is that the Church in mission has a relevant ministry to the needs of the world.

For our purpose we believe that the Christian Church was born in a situation of religious pluralism and so it was commissioned to carry out the Great Commission in the same context. Therefore, Judaism, whether that of the Pharisees or Sadducees, imperial religions or even Greek idolatry were some forms of religious pluralism; and there were some thousands of other religions (cf. Rom. 1:18-32), although not recognised by the powers of the time.

It is easy to think that if Jesus Christ had been aware and knew the world lives in a situation of religious pluralism, he would have had second thoughts about the Great Commission. Perhaps the study group in Vancouver entertained thoughts like these when it released the statement in the following manner:

In the end, the great communities of faith will not have disappeared. None will have 'won' over the others. Jews will still be Jews; Muslims still Muslims; and those of the great Eastern faiths still Buddhists or Hindus or Taoists. Africa will still witness to its traditional life view; China to its inheritance. People will still come from the East and West, the North and the South and sit down in the Kingdom of God without having first become 'Christians' like us (in Green 1990:45)

But we would argue that Jesus Christ knew about religious pluralism but does not look at the situation in the same way people do. People see only religions and become satisfied by studying religions and producing convents.

Indeed, religious studies are of greater relevance than before and many study religion simply because it is interesting. But Christ sees beyond religion, observing the fundamental needs of mankind. He is concerned about their lives and their future. This

does not undermine religious studies in most of our institutions. But beyond religions are people with needs. Seeing matters in this way helps to avoid a colonial mentality which sought to divide the world between Christian and non-Christian lands, focusing mainly on religions than on persons.

Unlike the Vancouver statement, at the end is not what people believe but what they are and what they need? In spite of their religious persuasions, there are needy people in all cultures and religions, there are needy Muslims, Buddhists, Taoists, Chinese and needy African ancestral spiritualists. But there are also needy Christians since Christianity has become religionised. Their needs are not different from our needs. In spite of our religious standing, we all are under sin and are unable to save our selves. The fundamental problem is the blindness overtaken the world. Christ's mission calls us to recognise our blindness. We all are the ones who are the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind, and the bruised (Lk. 4:18ff). But we have always denied this pointing to ourselves as self-sufficient, and self-righteous, and pointing away from ourselves, somewhere in Third World Countries as the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind, and the bruised. In the same breath, the elite in Third World Countries, point away from themselves to the have-nots as the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind, and the bruised. But the mission of Christ is to the person regardless of their status.

The Church should be in a better position to know that world religions have become morally bankrupt. As many and honourable they may be, they could not redeem their own people from their sin. Beside that, biblical salvation has never been salvation from religions but always from sin (Mat. 1:21). Change of religion is not salvation but change of a person.

This is where mission became so deficient. During colonialism missionaries strived to change the religions of indigenous people and attempted to Christianise them by changing their cultures. However, depaganisation itself is not salvation. To change persons is not to change their religion but transform their hearts. Religion is the product of the depraved heart.

Essentially, Christianity is not concerned with the externals but the internals. In is in this context that the Church is commanded to make disciples of all nations (Mat. 28:18-20). In this exercise, the Church is not alone but Christ is with them (Mat. 28:20).

Social concern on the part of the Church arises from obedience to the Great Commission. It is to the world that the Church has been commissioned and being socially concerned the Church emphasises its obligation to serve the world. Therefore, in terms of this presentation, we believe that there are still reasons warranting the Great Commission in the context of religious pluralism.

4.2.2 The Church in Mission and Social Action

The preceding section suggests that Christian social involvement is not the issue; but the issue remains the fact as to how and where the Church in mission should become socially involved (August 2000). It is at this very place where divergent views had already been adopted particularly in regard to the manner in which the Christian Church should become socially involved.

The views already adopted range from *laissez-faire* to radical social involvement. Perhaps a brief survey of some of the methods of social involvement suggested will be helpful. We will first evaluate the latest three methods identified in the *Kairos Document* (1986) as State theology, Church theology and Prophetic or radical theology or Black Theology. Thereafter we will introduce an alternative method, which we believe to be more distinctively the solution to social involvement.

Basically, the *Kairos Document* (1986) describes itself as a "Challenge to the Church" by offering "A theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa". It expresses the views of Black theologians about the political situation in South Africa and proposes a way to deal with it.

Akin to the *Kairos Document* is the *Evangelical Witness in South Africa* (1986) originated by Concerned Evangelicals to criticise their own theology and practice in the light of the South African apartheid regime. Since these three theologies are also implied in the latter document, we now would proceed to outline their content using a

grid with the following categories: *characterisation; methodology, agents, social involvement and critical evaluation*. We shall begin with the "State Theology".

4.2.2.1 State Theology⁵¹ and Social Involvement

A. *Characterisation of State Theology*

- The name "State Theology" is one chosen by the *Kairos* theologians to depict the South African apartheid State. It is averred that "the South African apartheid State has a theology of its own". Apartheid, after all, was first conceived of in the church. And the church⁵² was used as the model for the state. Apartheid is seen and defended as a "Christian policy that expresses the will of God for this country" (Boesak in Wallis and Hollyday 1989:47).
- Essentially State Theology would be simply the theological justification of the status quo described as "racism, capitalism and totalitarianism" (*Kairos* Document 1986:3). It is characterised as offering blessing to injustice, canonising the will of the powerful and reducing the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy. The State theology characterises those who exercise or legitimate oppression against other human races. For this reason, the "State Theology is not only heretical, it is blasphemous" (*Kairos* Document 1986:8). This theology came to depict the Apartheid system and the Churches that openly supported it in South Africa.

⁵¹ It is necessary to note that the term "State Theology," originated with Black theologians in an attempt at caricaturising the Apartheid government and its administration in South Africa. Thus, "State Theology" is merely a term serving as a tool to criticise the ruling class during the Apartheid era. However, the term is also used to depict sections of churches that were mooted to be colluding with the state, legitimising many of its social policies.

⁵² The Dutch Reformed Church

B. Methodology of State Theology

- The State Theology distorts “theological concepts and biblical text for its own political purposes”. Attention is drawn to “four key examples”: the use of the Romans 13:1-7; the idea of ‘Law and Order, the use of the word, ‘communist’ and the use of the name ‘God’.
- Firstly the State Theology is accused of not only theologically justifying racism, capitalism and totalitarianism, nor is it only accused of blessing and canonising the will of the powerful and reducing the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy, but also of subverting Romans 13:1-7 to give an absolute and ‘divine’ authority to the State (*Kairos Document 1986:3*).
- Secondly, the State has created discriminatory laws of apartheid, which is the organisation and institutionalisation of the disorder of oppression and employs the concept of law and order to maintain the status quo. “Anyone who wishes to change this law and this order is made to feel that they are lawless and disorderly. In other words they are made to feel guilty of sin” (*Kairos Document 1986:5*).
- Thirdly, the State Theology is strongly opposed to communism if not being grossly threatened but by the mere mention of the word. “Anything that threatens the status quo is labelled ‘communist’. Anyone who opposes the State and especially anyone who rejects its theology is simply dismissed as a ‘communist’” (*Kairos Document 1986:7*).
- For the State Theology, the word ‘evil’ and ‘communist’ have become synonymous. Finally, the State Theology employs the use of the name of God in various ways: military chaplains use it to encourage the South African Defence Force, police chaplains use it to strengthen policemen and cabinet ministers use it in their propaganda speeches. “But perhaps the most revealing of all is the blasphemous use of God’s holy name in the preamble to the new apartheid constitution” (*Kairos Document 1986:7*).

C. *Agents of State Theology*

- Agents of the State Theology are more pronounced in both the *Kairos Document* (1986) and the *Concerned Evangelicals* (1986) than elsewhere (e.g.; Maimela 1987). Chief among them is the “South African apartheid State”. “The South African apartheid State has a theology of its own and we have chosen to call it ‘State Theology’” (*Kairos Document* 1986:3).
- This is perhaps more obvious from at least two instances: the use of the word “God” as mentioned above, and the “preamble to the new apartheid constitution” which reads:

In humble submission to Almighty God, who controls the destinies of nations and the history of people who gathered our forebears together from many lands and gave them this their own; who has guided them from generation to generation; who has wondrously delivered them from the danger that beset them (in *Kairos Document* 1986:3).

- But the South African Apartheid State is not the only one identified as an agent of State Theology but also “evangelical groups in every church from the Roman Catholic Church to African Independent Churches with the so-called Pentecostal churches being the chief bearers of this phenomenon” (*Concerned Evangelical* 1986:24). It is further stated that

These groups and related churches tend to assume conservative positions with a blanket support of the South African apartheid regime. They are so obsessed and pre-occupied with what they call the “threat of communism” to the extent of blessing any regime in the world that is anti-communist however evil and corrupt it may be. They have put their eyes so much on their conception of the “evil” of communism that they cannot see the evils of the systems within which they are living, and, in most cases, they are part of the perpetrators or beneficiaries of these systems.

- These groups are further characterised as worrying about “the speck in their brothers’ and sisters’ eyes but cannot detect the log in their own eyes” (:24), feeling “comfortable with this log in their eyes”; needing “the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to enable them to remove this log;” considering “western Christian civilization or the western capitalistic culture” as “identical

with the Christian faith or the demands of the gospel”, and being against “any other system (especially economic) which is not necessarily capitalist...taken as being atheistic and therefore anti-Christian,” failing in their understanding to “see a possibility of being socialist and also Christian”.

- It is strongly averred (in *Concerned Evangelicals* 1986:25-6) that

The most striking element of these groups/churches which is an inherent part of their mode of operation is that they are always silent about the evils of the South African apartheid regime and its necessary violence to maintain it. They are quiet about the oppression and exploitation of millions of South African Blacks and are not moved by the pain, misery and suffering, blacks are subjected to. But if the victims of this system raise their voice to resist this system the voices of condemnation from these conservative evangelical groups become the loudest. These are the voices we have heard condemning prophetic church leaders like Bishop D. Tutu, Dr. A. Boesak, Dr. B. Naude and Archbishop D. Hurley, amongst many others... We are convinced that the western capitalist culture has become an idol of these groups. It has become their god which they so love and worship... We are aware that there are some blacks who, having been carried by this lie preached by these groups believe that being Christian means worrying about heavenly things alone rather than earthly things. The only time they worry about earthly things is when they are called to defend the status quo.

- Matters regarded this way; the tendency of these groups “is a serious concern for us. It is a tendency, which ends up more on the side of the devil rather than on the side of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is an indictment against the evangelical tradition and makes us ashamed of it. It also makes it difficult to preach the evangelical faith in townships of South Africa because this faith, this gospel of salvation, is now associated with what is called “reactionary” forces in the townships. Consequently, “it is our prayer that all evangelicals should fight against this destructive conservatism of evangelicals with a Godly jealousy for the sake of the gospel of the Lord Jesus” (:26).

D. State Theology and Social Involvement

- The State Theology has created discriminatory laws of apartheid, which is the organisation and institutionalisation of the disorder of oppression and employs

the concept of law and order to maintain the status quo. "Anyone who wishes to change this law and this order is made to feel that they are lawless and disorderly; in other words they are made to feel guilty of sin" (*Kairos Document* 1986:5). The State also appeals to the consciences of Christians in the name of 'law and order' to accept this use of violence as a God-given duty; in order to re-establish the status quo of oppression.

E. Critical Evaluation

- The evaluation of the State Theology as portrayed in both the *Kairos Document* and *Concerned Evangelicals* may, at glance, seem a facile operation but in all probability, it is not⁵³.
- Firstly, one notes a passionate, powerful negative tone with which the South African Apartheid State is being described. It creates discriminatory laws and uses violence to maintain status quo. From the view point of the *Kairos* theologians and the *Concerned Evangelicals*, though the latter criticise their own theology and practice, there is virtually nothing good at all especially in the Apartheid system as espoused by the South African apartheid regime.
- This is apparent from the silence which characterises these theologians and evangelicals about the good of the Apartheid system in spite of the fact that many were raised and educated within the same system—today, its laws are discriminatory, its economy is capitalistic, it is anti-communist and anti-socialist in character, it is blasphemous to God, and side with the devil, etc. Based on this, my own criticism is that the *Kairos* theologians should have been objective even if they did not seek to detach themselves emotionally from the situation and from their own investigation for the sake of objectivity.
- Secondly, one also notes many contradictory statements raised by the same theologians and the concerned evangelicals. But we will mention but few. One of the difficulties is to determine the fact whether communism was only opposed

⁵³ Both the *Kairos Document* (1992) and the *Concerned Evangelicals* (1986) appeared at a time when the political situation in South Africa was very tense. Most organisations that fought against Apartheid were banned. There was unrest in most areas of the country. Many South Africans were in exile if not in prison. The situation was described by many journalists as hopeless (Wallis & Hollyday 1989:113).

by Apartheid regimes and or capitalism was only acceptable in Apartheid regimes.

- Given the fact that there could be Christians in socialism could there not also be racists and oppressors in the same system? Is violence only limited to Apartheid regimes? Is tribal violence anything less than Apartheid violence? Although we should have been concerned about the conditions of the oppressed and the poor in South Africa, yet we should have not failed “speaking truth in love” (Eph. 4:15); and besides we should always remember, “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23), both the oppressors and the oppressed. The Scriptures have never retracted those words. Paul further declares:

There is no one righteous not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away; they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practise deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes (Rom. 3:10-18).

- The best every one of us could hope to do is to see humanity in the light of Scriptures “so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God” (Rom. 3:19). I believe that both the *Kairos Document* and the *Concerned Evangelicals* have bought much in idolising Apartheid and Communism. One was the goddess of evil and the other of goodness and was concerned about both.
- Beside everything else, the term, “state theology” is a misnomer; is there ever anything known in the world worth to be called “state theology”? Is any theology practising racial segregation, promoting the enforcement of law, or manipulating Rom. 13 for its own advantage, etc., a “state theology”?

4.2.2.2 The Church Theology⁵⁴ and Social Involvement

A. Characterisation of the Church Theology.

- There are various theological disciplines in South Africa; nevertheless, there is “a series of inter-related theological assumptions” between them, which the *Kairos* theologians have chosen to call ‘Church theology’.
- Church Theology is characterised as being too dogmatic, if not “traditional”. It is well known that “this theology does not express the faith of the majority of Christians in South Africa today who form the greater part of most of our Churches” (*Kairos Document* 1986:9). At the most Church theology does not approve of oppressive social situations on the ground but shuns being directly involved in the same.

In a limited, guarded and cautious way this theology is critical of apartheid. Its criticism, however, is superficial and counter-productive because instead of engaging in an in-depth analysis of the signs of our times, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition and then uncritically and repeatedly applies them to our situation (*Kairos Document* 1986:9).

- Its limitations and its guarded cautiousness arise from the “*type of faith and spirituality* that has dominated Church life for centuries...spirituality has tended to be an other-worldly affair that has very little, if anything at all, to do with the affairs of this world...Social and political matters were seen as worldly affairs that have nothing to do with the spiritual concerns of the Church...Public affairs and social problems were thought to be beyond the sphere of spirituality” (:16).

⁵⁴ The term “Church Theology,” like “State Theology,” originates in Black theology used to caricature the behaviour of some sections of the Church’s general unwillingness to “participate in the final overthrow of the apartheid colonial regime” (cf. Mdlalose in *The African Communist*, No. 104, First Quarter, 1986).

B. *Methodology of Church Theology*

- One interesting factor is the way the methodology of Church Theology is being described by Black theologians in the *Kairos Document*. We will have more to say about this during the course of this study. The methods of Church Theology are perhaps clearly spelled out by Maimela (1987:76) in an answer to the question:

Granted that this simplified version of the traditional understanding of hermeneutics is correct, the question that arises is what does it tell us about the relation between theory and practice in traditional theology? The answer is pretty simple:" It says: *that the duty of theologians, as interpreters of the Bible in which God's message to humanity is enshrined, is above all to peel off the wrappings in which the revealed truth is enshrined, and to discover the truth and clothe it in terms understandable to a particular situation and time. The methodological movement is one of a straight line from theory to practice, that is, from biblical truth to Christian social practice (emphasis not mine.)*

- The lack of social analysis is essentially "the fundamental problem"; it characterises "the mistakes, and misunderstandings and inadequacies of this theology...Closely linked to this is the lack in Church Theology of an adequate understanding of politics and *political strategy*" (*Kairos Document* 1986:15).
- Most adherents of Church Theology are notorious for their non-violent stance. However, their "non-violence, expressed as a blanked condemnation of all that is *called* violence, has not only been unable to curb the violence of our situation, it has actually, although unwittingly, been a major contributing factor in the recent escalation of State violence" (*Kairos Document* 1986:13). The most the Church Theology could offer is to find a common ground between two radically rival parties – State Theology and Prophetic Theology. Usually,

The argument goes something like this: 'We must be fair. We must listen to both sides of the story. If the two sides can only meet to talk and negotiate they will sort out their differences and misunderstandings, and the conflict will be resolved (*Kairos Document* 1986:9-10).

- In so doing the Church theology proposes reconciliation and peace without giving thought to issues of justice. However, “no reconciliation is possible in South Africa *without justice*, without the total dismantling of apartheid” (:10; italics not mine).
- Although the Church Theology advocates justice, it envisages the kind of justice of reform, which is “the justice that is determined by the oppressor, by the white minority and that is offered to the people as a kind of concession. It does not appear to be the more radical justice that comes from below and is determined by the people of South Africa” (:11).

C. *Agents of Church Theology.*

- While the Apartheid State is the chief architect and a perpetrator of the State Theology, missionaries and some English speaking Churches as well as some African Independent Churches constitute the agents of Church Theology. This would also include “evangelical groups in every church from the Roman Catholic Church to African Independent Churches with the so-called evangelical and Pentecostal churches being the chief bearers of this phenomenon” (*Concerned Evangelicals* 1986:24). It is further remarkable to see how these agents are being described:

These groups and related churches tend to all assume conservative positions with a blanket support of the South African apartheid regime. They are so obsessed and pre-occupied with what they call the “threat of communism” to the extent of blessing any regime in the world that is anti-communist however evil and corrupt it may be. They have put their eyes so much on their conception of the “evil” of communism that they cannot see the evils of the systems within which they are living, and, in most cases they are part of the perpetrators or beneficiaries of these systems.

D. *Church Theology and Social Involvement*

- Agents of Church Theology, especially early Missionaries, are not concerned about the suffering of people on the ground. They are pre-occupied by reforming Africans through western civilization.

Because of the influence of the West, because of the perceptions of western Christians of the wave of colonization as a victory for the missionary enterprise and the spread of what they called Christian civilization, most of the missionaries could not see the evils of colonization⁵⁵. They could not see the brutalization of the aborigines of the lands they were colonizing. In fact when the colonialists gained victory against the aborigines of these lands and subdued them the missionaries saw an opening for the Christianization of those people (*Concerned Evangelical* 1986:21).

- Western Civilization is synonymous with Christianity. That is why they would raise daughter churches resembling in most respects those of their home front. Conservative churches on the other hand, are preoccupied by saving lost souls to heaven. As we have seen, their concept of justice is fragile and in most cases, they are silent about the sufferings of their parish on the ground.

E. *Critical evaluation*

- We are aware that what we have said so far about Church Theology, does not adequately represent everything that both the *Kairos* theologians and the Concerned Evangelicals have said. To do that would amount to reproducing verbatim everything these people have said.
- Nevertheless, what we have said so far, merely serves to create a beachhead from which our evaluation would arise. In most cases, the evaluation we could offer here does not materially differ from what we have said about the State Theology above.

⁵⁵ However Chitando (1998:77) precisely argues for the missionary in this regard when he said, the popular caricature of missionaries as handmaidens of colonialism is too simplistic. While the missionary and the colonialist shared the same culture, there were fundamentally differences in terms of orientation. As a paradigm for the present church, some missionaries, albeit in a paternalistic manner, protested against the 'anthropological pauperisation' of the blacks. Although most missionary organisations operated with the triumvirate of Christianity, commerce and civilisation in mind, they did not share the colonialist vision of reducing local people to the level of non-being.

- We must admit that the Church in South Africa was confronted by a difficult situation with no apparent answers. However, to accuse its adherents as being mere chattels in the hands of western missionaries and wittingly supporting State violence is a gross oversight on the part of both the Concerned Evangelicals and the *Kairos* theologians. This is by itself an insinuation that missionaries agreed with everything done by colonialists. For Chitando (1998:77), this would be a simple view. According to him, it would be important to point out that even forced labour was not accepted by some missionaries. The missionaries might have protested against the inhuman treatment of the blacks but the colonialists were fully convinced that the 'native' did not deserve better treatment.

- We are of the view that no mortal man, be her or she in South Africa or elsewhere, will ever know the full extent of the involvement of the Church in social transformation⁵⁶. Suffice to say here that the Church has always been in the forefront of the South African political scene even before the arrival of both the Concerned Evangelicals and the *Kairos* theologians on the South African scene.

- That (the role of the Church) should initially have been acknowledged by them before selecting themselves as an exclusive, particular theological class embarking on creating scenarios they labelled "State Theology, Church Theology and Prophetic Theology" in an attempt to interpret the South African situation. This also would reflect the obsession of class-ism characterising Third World countries. People do not feel well unless they belong to a particular class, be it of economy, of theologians, of race, or of politics and or society, etc.

- However, when considering the involvement of the Church in social transformation, we should be careful not to think that everything that has to do with transformation amounted to political activism. From its inception and by inference, the Church has learned long ago that regime changes in African history have not translated into lasting peace in the society especially with the

⁵⁶ But "transformation" should not be a regime change, but as August (2000:50) suggests, "...Transformation is the change from a condition of human existence contrary to God's purpose to one in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God".

use of violence; furthermore, regime changes in African history have hardly benefited the poor and the oppressed.

- Regime change is, therefore, not synonymous with transformation. Regime change is an event with short ranges, but transformation is a process encompassing a wide range of issues giving impact to worldview. Moreover, transformation amounts to regime change but not the other way round.
- Finally, we may also point out that the Church had, long before this been working on the transformation of the South African situation. By inference, it has been aware that transformation leads to liberation and not the other way around. To transform the situation you must transform the people. Much weight does not lie on the fact; how can one be transformed unless is liberated; but on how can one be liberated unless is transformed. "You shall know the truth," (transformation) and the truth shall set you free' (liberation) (John 8:36).
- Liberation without transformation leads to manipulation and neo-oppression. Being aware of this, Enoch Sontonga, a Methodist teacher at Kliptown, near Johannesburg, was inspired to compose a transformation song in 1897 regarded by many as a freedom song, reflecting at the same time that glorious freedom comes from the LORD. We shall simply quote the most common Xhosa wording, followed by a Sotho translation and a Zulu ending of the song, as found in de Gruchy (1986:65f).

Xhosa:

Nkosi, sikelel' iAfrika
Maluphakanyisw' uphondo
Iwayo
Yiva imithandazo yethu
Usisikelele,
Thina lusapho lwakho
Yihla Moya (2 x)
Yihla Moya Oyingcwele
Usisikelele
Thina lusapho lwakho

Lord, bless Africa
May her horn of strength
be raised
Hear our prayers
Bless us
We, your people.
Come, Spirit
Come, Holy Spirit
Bless us
We, your people.

Sotho:

Morena, boloka sechaba sa heso
O fedise dintwa le matshwenyeho

O se boleke (2 x)
O se boleke Morena
Sechaba sa heso (2 x)

Lord, bless our nation
End, her warfare and
suffering.
Bless
Bless, Lord
our nation

Zulu ending:

Makube njalo (2 x)
Kuze kube ngonaphakade (2 x)

May it be so always
For ever and ever

- Another song worth considering its content is the one composed in Zulu, which is frequently sung in churches, also implying that the Church was much involved in social transformation. We shall reproduce it verbatim as follows:

Thula sizwe, ungabo khala
uJehova wakho uzokunqobela

Inkululeko, Inkululeko
uJehova wakho uzokunqobela
for you

Be still, people do not cry
Your LORD will conquer
for you
Freedom! Freedom
Your LORD will conquer

- That does not mean that political changes were insignificant in the eyes of the Church to effect amelioration of the conditions on the ground. What we are saying is that merely political changes are not enough. However, we must also be wary of thinking that when the disciples turned the world upside down, it was as a consequence of their political activism, when, in fact, it was a case of their being Spirit filled. Jesus Christ shunned the use of the sword to decide matters on the ground, in many instances. The fact that the pre-Reformation Church, Reformation Church and the post-Reformation Church, and that theologian so and so, did recommend the use of sword is not significant enough to match up the Spirit that was in Jesus Christ.

4.2.2.3 Prophetic Theology⁵⁷ and Social Involvement

A. *Characterisation of Prophetic Theology*

- Kekana (1988:7) calls Prophetic Theology, a situational theology of crisis. “It is overtly political in its judgement”. It is “solidly grounded in the Bible” (*Kairos Document* 1986:17). It is not “mere academic exercise” (:17). Generally “prophetic theology differs from academic theology because, whereas academic theology deals with all biblical themes in a systematic manner and formulates general Christian principles and doctrines, prophetic theology concentrates on those aspects of the Word of God that have an immediate bearing upon the critical situation in which we find ourselves” (:17).
- As a “situational theology” (Kekana 1988), “The theology of the prophets does not pretend to be comprehensive and complete, it speaks to the particular circumstances of a particular time and place — the KAIROS” (:17). It differs from the academic theology in that “it is always a call to action” (:17) rather than having “a purely theoretical or academic interest in God and in the sight of the time” (:17ff).
- General, prophetic theology “is always *confrontational*” (:18; emphasis not mine.)

It confronts the evils of the time and speaks out against them in no uncertain terms. Prophetic theology is not afraid to take a stand, clearly and unambiguously. Prophetic statements are stark and simple without being hedged in with qualifications or possible exceptions. They deal with good and evil, justice and injustice, God and the devil. It is not surprising then that any theology that is truly prophetic will be controversial and in some circles it will be very unpopular. The prophets were persecuted and Jesus was crucified.

⁵⁷The term “Prophetic Theology,” like “State Theology,” and “Church Theology,” also originated with Black theologians to depict their confrontational approach to the Apartheid state. However, the term, “Prophetic Theology,” is not appropriate to describe their enterprise. As much as Black theologians take black experience as their starting point, perhaps the term, “Priestly Theology,” could have been far much more suitable than locating their enterprise somewhere between the two terms. Traditionally, Old Testament priests spoke to God on behalf of the people. They offered priestly prayers. Prophets, on the other hand, spoke from God to the people.

- In spite of its being confrontational, prophetic theology is “deeply *spiritual*” (:18; emphasis not mine). “All its words and actions will have to be infused with a spirit of fearlessness and courage, a spirit of love and understanding, a spirit of joy and hope, a spirit of strength and determination” (:18). It places “a great deal of emphasis upon *hope*’ (:18; emphasis not mine.). In addition to these, it is “thoroughly practical and *pastoral*” (:18; emphasis not mine.)

B. Methodology of Prophetic Theology

- It addresses people on the level of their current experience. Thus it is “relevant to what we are experiencing in South Africa today” (:17). By its devotion to the “*reading of the signs of the times*” (:17; emphasis not mine.), it is aware of what is happening in the light of the gospel, the starting point being the experience of the present KAIROS.
- This is the result of its commitment to social analysis rather than to scriptural analysis. Realising that God sides with the poor (1986:28), it encourages Christians and Churches to participate in the struggle for liberation. However, the struggle of liberation was mainly characterised by violence from both sides, from the people and the Church against the State⁵⁸ Further encouragements to the Church to be involved in the liberating struggle comes from the *Kairos* theologians when they said:

Christians, if they are not doing so already, must quite simply participate in the struggle for liberation and for a just society. The campaigns of the people, from consumer boycotts to stayaways, need to be supported and encouraged by the Church. Criticism will sometimes be necessary but encouragement and support will also be necessary. In other words, the present crisis challenges the whole Church to move beyond a mere ‘ambulance ministry’ to a ministry of involvement and participation (1986:28ff).

⁵⁸ It was Rev. Channing Phillips (in Tingle 1992:23) who said in this regard, “If the church is to take its mission of reconciliation seriously, if it is to attack racism significantly, then it must be willing to be not only an institution of love, but an institution of power, making economic and political inputs into societies to effect new equilibria of power. And where a society does not permit restructuring power that produces justice throughout economic and political manoeuvres, the church ought not to shy away from aiding and abetting the development of the only power available – the power of violence”.

- Furthermore, the Church is encouraged to support special campaigns especially those of legitimate political organisations. It must avoid being a “Third Force between the oppressor and the oppressed” (1986:29). It “*cannot collaborate with tyranny*” (1986:30; italics not mine). It should not simply pray for the change of government, but to “mobilise its members in every parish to begin to think and work and plan for a change of government in South Africa” (1986:30). In doing so it “will sometimes have to confront and to disobey the State in order to obey God” (:30). Moreover, the Church should discourage their children to embrace the God of the oppressors.

C. *Agents of Prophetic Theology*

- The Black theologians are agents of the Prophetic theology who speak on behalf of the silent majority. In this way, their enterprise could also be described as “Priestly Theology”. Realising that God sides with the poor they have consciously taken a stand on the side of the poor to fight all forms of injustices.
- They are deeply touched by the horror of human slaughter they had been witnessing taking place during apartheid times. While this happens, they envisioned the Church bowed down there, bound heavenward, folding its hands and simply looking on, while theologians paused on their ivory towers being indifferent to the sufferings of the people.
- Being utterly dismayed by the perception, they charged, “Much of what we do in our Church services has lost its relevance to the poor and the oppressed. Our services and sacraments have been appropriated to serve the need of the individual for comfort and security” (1986:29).
- The *Kairos Document* thus serves as a vertical duct to help bring down the Church to participate in the struggle for liberation and for just society. However, later Black theologians seemed to realise that much of what they said, believed and suggested was simply an act of exercise to stretch up. This is inferred from

the statement, "Although the document suggests various modes of involvement it does not prescribe the particular actions anyone should take" (1986:31).

D. Prophetic Theology and Social Involvement

- Although the Black Theologians did not seek to prescribe any particular mode of actions yet they would not have discouraged the use of force to achieve liberation, especially in situation in which oppression would be maintained through the violence.
- It would seem that in the *Kairos* situation, as could be inferred, the ends justify the means; this means that whatever route you take is acceptable as long as it will lead you to your destination. By so doing the *Kairos* theologians simply serve to legitimate the means⁵⁹ which the Early Church would have sought to avoid by all means; for example, consumer boycotts, stayaways, civil disobedience, etc., to transform the situation on the ground and work for a just society.

E. Critical Evaluation

- It is obvious that these theologies mentioned above are reactionary in character although most would have preferred the word "revolutionary". One major commendable thing about the trio is that they have recaptured the political dimension of the missionary mandate of the Church of which we will have more to say in section 4.4 below.
- State theology is alleged to be seeking to maintain the status quo, the Church theology to change the status quo through rational, moderate means, while Prophetic theology calls for involvement in the struggle for social justice.

⁵⁹ In February 1991, John Kane-Berman (in Tingle 1992:4), the executive director of the South African Institute of Race Relation is said to have made these remarks: "Christian leadership in South Africa has helped to legitimate violence as an instrument of liberation... Black people in the townships are reaping a whirlwind of violence that the churches have helped to sow"

- Like contextualization (see chapter 6), they are theologies *ex post facto*. They may be good or bad in their own and for those who choose to adopt or not to adopt them; and undoubtedly they served the purpose for which they were designed.
- Generally prophetic theology is alarmed if not appalled at all by the seemingly uselessness of the Church in regard to political injustices on the ground. Besides, the Church seems to be investing more in elaborate buildings and programs to the point that they cannot afford poor people, that they need people who are richer in order to support these programs.
- When this happens the church turns away from the poor and needy. Prophetic theology displays its own shock by thinking that the Church might have always been committed to the saving of souls while maintaining quietism about the suffering of the masses. It is wary of the ministry that is confined within the walls of the church buildings while the situation out there calls for rescue.
- It resolves to challenge the Church to participate in the struggle for liberation and for a just society. However, it is not clear what the *Kairos* theologians believe just societies consist of. One is even not sure that simply the elimination of apartheid as a system and oppressive regimes on the ground will result in just societies.
- Clearly, indications now are virtually to the contrary, in spite of the fact that the apartheid regime has been done away with. Taking as our cue conditions of countries north of our borders indications are that one oppressive regime will more likely than not be replaced or succeeded by another oppressive regime.
- On the other hand, we should not be too naïve to subsume that democracy is a magic system, which is void of all oppressive measures and structures. Democracy is merely a statistical system and has little to do with ethics. People are as vulnerable to apartheid as they may be to democracy.

- It is not simply playing with words to say that people can be oppressed democratically. As in the apartheid era, not all will live happily and be fulfilled in a democracy. But what does this amount to? It amounts to the fact that it is not systems that oppress people—but people oppressing fellow people. A system *qua* a system cannot be just or unjust, only people can. We should understand the present situation obtaining both in South Africa and in the countries north of our borders in the light of this. Blaming systems instead of ourselves amounts to euphemism.

4.2.2.4 The Church and Responsible Social Involvement

There is no doubt that the Scriptures give much space to the theme of justice and the indigent and oppressed. Generally the care of the poor is a defining characteristic of the Christian Church. It is a fact that about 400 verses in the Bible indicate God's concern for the underprivileged and over 80 verses underscore divine concern for justice.

We will not list these verses in this study. Suffice to say that God gives a direct mandate that the Church has to take care of the poor. In some instances, a reward is even mentioned for those who would do it. For instance, "Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble" (Ps. 41:1); and "He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God" (Pr. 14:31). This confirms once more that God is on the side of the weak and suffering, however, not at the expense of the rich.

In our view, at least two principles should serve to guide the Church towards its Christian social involvement: preventative and proactive social involvement and remedial and redemptive social involvement. The former is *a priori* and the latter *ex post facto*. Both of these construct a synthesis of evangelism and social action. We shall now proceed to consider these principles.

A. Preventative and Proactive Social Involvement

The Word of God and Social Concern. This is akin to the salt principle. "You are the salt of the earth" (Mt. 5:13). The salt is preventative and antiseptic. By the preventative and proactive principle is understood that the Church has consistently sought to teach self-restraint pertaining to behavioural patterns that are characteristic of the root of evil. In the New Testament the apostle Paul encouraged believers to desist themselves from

whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed...anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language...and...put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator (Colossians 3:5,8).

This is the imperative following the indicative, "since, then you have been raised with Christ..," demonstrating that Christ is the catalyst in moral and social change. It is interesting that "greed" is numbered among the properties of our "earthly nature". It happens that so often researchers focus on poverty in isolation of greed, which is essentially materialism. There is poverty because, *inter alia*, there is greed. In Galatians 5:19 Paul classifies certain behavioural acts as belonging to the sinful nature.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred; discord, jealousy fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

Such observed behaviours as these are anti-social and are forms of behaviour which are fast becoming characteristic of our communities. The focus of our argument is that simply addressing the question of poverty in isolation of anti-social behaviours, believing that by so doing transformation would have been achieved, defies all logic. This has been the early pitfall of Black theology; it seems to hold strongly on the idea that social justice will automatically produce a corresponding improvement in personal behaviour.

Indeed there is much suffering among indigenous people. People have been reduced to poverty and suffering through no fault of their own. But issues such as drug abuse, alcohol abuse, sexual perversions, prostitution, wanton abortions, infanticides, homosexuality, gambling and pornography and others are fast becoming part of the

acceptable if not tolerable norms of our societies and deviant behaviour in these areas all lead people to become part of the social malaise of society. It is behaviours like these and similar others which breed poverty on the ground. Consequently, some forms of suffering and poverty are self-inflicted and it is the predictable consequences of irresponsible and immoral living.

Consider, for instance, one of the greatest social evils of our day - alcoholism. Alcohol, on its own, leads to poverty. It has devastated individuals, families and the nation. It is perhaps the single gravest social problem confronting society today. Its social implications for destruction are well documented, and among these drunken driving is causing the state millions of rands not to mention the loss of thousands of lives on the South African roads. Appeals for moderation in alcohol are often ignored if not falling on deaf ears.

It is, therefore, the task of the Church to be proactive and to teach self-restraint by alerting the young generation to evil outcomes of behaviours such as these in society, which eventually lead to poverty. By so doing, however, the Church would have not brought anything new into society except for teaching society about what is in its own best interest. The Church simply emphasises what society feels deep down in its own heart about what should have been the order of the day. The only problem with the Church is that it does not pronounce itself clearly enough to impact the community with its message.

It is true that human secularism and relativism will always find fault with preventative principles based on value judgements. It has often said that the forms of behaviour listed above were merely "little sins" which the Church needed not bother about. What should have been the focus of the Church should have been "macro sins" such as racism, apartheid, oppression, tribalism, etc. However, the Church has always been of the view that "little sins" often grow into structural sins, which would overcome the nation; such small things, like a little straw breaking a camel's back, should be noted.

B. Remedial and Redemptive Social Responsibility

The other facet is the remedial program for people who have become socially disoriented and need redemption and reformation. The single thrust in such an effort is to proclaim the gospel of full salvation with emphasis on being holy.

The emphasis on the gospel and redemption here both suggest a particular line of approach to social ills. Indeed, it has been in the centre of the Holy Scriptures that personal and social illnesses arise from supernatural causes from which those who are thus affected are too weak to save themselves by whatever means at their disposal.

Advancement in science and technology do help nations to reconsider their social values but hardly suggest a practical answer effective enough to cure social illness. How can we use science to cure alcoholism, prostitution, debauchery, etc? Can education perhaps do any better in providing sustainable solutions to social illnesses? Will apathy and ignorance toward these kinds of behaviours improve our society? There can be no argument that education and science are good and effective in their own places, but using these in an attempt to cure social illness is untenable.

But, then what about improving the surface of the circumference through projects such as starting homes for unwed mothers, orphans, nursing homes, food and clothing distribution centres, and retirement homes? Will improving the circumference translates into healing the heart and the centre? Can exterior remedies cure interior illness? Russel De Long (1965:93), posed a series of questions on how to change humanity, and we shall reproduce few of those:

Can man be changed? If not then humanity is doomed to remain in its present state of helplessness and hopelessness. If he can the problem shifts to the question; how may he be changed? Can human nature be changed by eugenics? Will more careful scientific breeding produce better human beings or just better human bodies? Can human nature be changed by education? Will filling a person's mind with facts also fill his soul with faith? Can human nature be changed by eugenics? If you give a man a good environment without, will you also give him a good heart within? Can nature be changed by money? By giving a man a full pocketbook whereby his physical needs may be satisfied, have you also given him a full soul? Can human nature be changed by philosophy? By helping man to think well will you assist him thus to do well and be well? Can human nature be changed by medicine? By

cutting out diseased parts of the body by surgery and by injecting serums into the bloodstream with hypodermics, can you also remove sin from the soul and give a shot of inspiration to the spirit? Can human nature be changed by psychiatry or psychoanalysis? By revealing and confessing guilt, does one become so transformed that he is forgiven for his past sinful acts and is so remade that he will behave badly no more?

Undoubtedly, eugenics, philosophies, etc., are sufficient in their own areas of expertise, but in so far as responding to the questions raised above, the answer remains on the negative. Changing human nature demands God's intervention. De Long (1965:96) argues in the same tenor that

Man cannot change his own nature. He cannot lift himself by his own bootstraps. He cannot rise to a higher level without help from a higher source. If a man is physically ill, he does not cure himself. He seeks the help of a physician and accepts the aid of medicines. Men who are spiritually sick cannot heal themselves. Proposed mental or physical cures cannot cope with spiritual sickness. The remedy must be spiritual.

For this reason Dunn, Reglin, Nielson and Deasley (1981:134) are correct in saying that:

A true theological basis for social responsibility must address itself to the message of redemption as the mission of the church, but the church should also provide ways and means for alleviating the ills of society. We are not only interested in individual reformation of sinners, but also broad societal issues such as the refugees, starvation, war, abortion, drugs, race relations, women's rights, and many other issues of sweeping social implications for generation to come

The failure of social responsibility to address itself to the message of redemption results in manipulating distressed situations for selfish reasons. It is indeed distressing in part that the Christian social responsibility has now become a lucrative business for those who are after money and power.

Christian social responsibility, especially toward the poor has been turned to viable platforms upon which to ask for more funds to be made available in the name of the "poor". In South Africa, for instance, some churches adopted a "prophetic stance" by

being boldly and severely critical about the manner in which Apartheid governments handled the question of race and poverty especially among people of African origin.

Many people began to look upon the Church to champion their cause, but now the frequent question becomes, "To what extent are those churches keeping a "prophetic stance" from the ruling African National Congress?" (Jafta 2001:124). One does not question the need for a positive relationship between the Church and the State. Predilection towards the Church and the State should not be seen as identical. But if this happens then it becomes true that when money speaks truth is silent.

Christian social responsibility should have been an act of love by those who had first experienced Christ's love and would like Christ to share that love with the others. It is not merely a response to social plight qua social plight. It should not be allowed to degenerate into a "theology of bread" (Balcomb 1998). God is not the Saviour simply because his people were oppressed, vulnerable, and weak. Everybody motivated enough can do this. Our social condition is not the cause of God's love for us, as God acts out of his love. In the same way, the Church should act out Christ's love through Christian social involvement.

4.2.2.5 Preliminary Evaluation

The foregoing presentation proves once again that God is more involved in human social affairs than the Church could realize. He controls history and the destinies of the people. Realizing God's ever-presence, David said, the LORD is my Shepherd (Ps. 23). Based on this, social involvement by the Church is in itself an act of joining or participating in God's activity already at work in society.

Attention was drawn to the fact that policies on the ground are not the ones oppressing other people, be they apartheid, democracies, communisms, etc. People are oppressed by people. Changing of these policies and replacing them with "good" ones does not eliminate oppression. This complicates matters further if we care to remember that oppression takes many forms: marital, political, social, tribal, economical, ethnic, racial, etc.

We propose that the heart is the problem. Based on this we can hardly have justice in the context of un-transformed society. Justice, peace, etc., are by-products of the transformed society. It follows then that transformation cannot be effected by a series of "good" and "just" policies. Orientation towards these policies will not sublimely change the condition of the heart. "The heart is deceitful" (Jer. 17:9). It needs redemption (Jer. 17:10). This has been the approach of the prophets to social ills of their day, and it is the same approach needed to the social ills of our day. Therefore, the Church has a relevant message for days like these in South Africa. But it has to be Christianized through evangelism. On this note, we shall now turn to the Evangelistic Mandate of the Church.

4.3 The Church in Mission and its Evangelistic Mandate

The Evangelistic dimension of the mandate of the Church has been better developed than the social mandate and that there is no need to dwell on this aspect to any greater length. This does not discount the fact that Evangelism is an important aspect of mission (Bosch 1991).

However, "Evangelism is only one aspect of evangelisation" (Nottingham 1998:313). It came after man's fall. It is the remedial aspect of the mandate of the Church. It asserts that the Church has to be a witness of the Gospel of Christ, and a carrier of the Good News.

But it also insists that the Church cannot do this unless it is itself redeemed and sanctified. If we were to go by what Mosoma (1981) has said above, the Church must first become the Church before embarking on its mission. In this section the Evangelistic mandate will be discussed only in as much as it lays bare my own assumptions and establishes a point of departure for the understanding of the witnessing role of the Church and of the spreading the gospel.

4.3.1 The Church as the Witness of the Gospel

This suggests that it is not the task of the Church to manufacture the Gospel but simply to preach or proclaim it. Jesus changes the world, and not us. *“Ten diepste is dit God self wat sendingwerk doen en nie óns nie”* (Bosch 1968:15). All we need to do is simply witness to what God has done for us and is doing in us. “You shall be my witness,” said Jesus (Acts 1:8).

We shall have more to say about several methods of witnessing in Chapter 7 when we discuss Christian witnessing as another form of involvement with the world. Suffice here to point out that the task of the Church is simply to “let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Mat. 5:16). This is the goal of witnessing and hence mission to the world. It is not only to alleviate social ills but also that people will “praise your Father in heaven”. We have been created to glorify God.

Again the Church is encouraged to “live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (I Pet. 2:12). Witnessing, in the context of this, means retelling what God has said and done for humanity through Jesus Christ of Nazareth⁶⁰.

The Church should be witness to the fact that through Jesus Christ God has come “to seek and to save what was lost” (Luk. 19:10). The emphasis is that God has come. “The Son of Man came...” (Luk. 19:10). This has a redemptive message for those who understand the quest for salvation and had done their utmost to reach to God by their own methods but have failed. It has a redemptive message for those who cared to recognise that they are the ones who are the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind, and the bruised. But the majority still do not recognise this spiritual blindness. They believed they were rich, overjoyed, free, sighted, and smart.

It is the good news to those who realize that their own means to save themselves are totally inadequate and that now God has made a provision for those who want to approach him. Again, such knowledge is the result of God’s Spirit working in the life of

⁶⁰ In Jesus Christ God has regenerated his people, He has justified them and adopted them as His children (I John 3:1)

an individual and a positive response by the same individual. Alister McGrath (1988:63) writes in this connection:

Evangelicals give an important place to the Holy Spirit, seeing that the Spirit as the one who brings spiritual understanding and rebirth; who seals our knowledge of our salvation, and who works to conform us to Christ. Word and Spirit are joined together in the final stage of conversion, in which the Holy Spirit applies the works of God to our minds and our lives causing faith to be born from understanding.

The role of the Spirit of God in Evangelism is an immense one. We have spoken about this when discussing the Content of its Missionary Mandate in chapter 3. Jesus Christ carried God's mission through the power of the Holy Spirit.

4.3.2 The Church as the Carrier of the Good News of Christ

Evangelism is about the Good News. Millard Erickson (1992) regards the Gospel as the heart of the ministry of the Church. According to him (:350-1), the Gospel is "one factor which gives basic shape to everything the church does, the element which lies at the heart of all its functions".

The Gospel centres upon the person of Jesus of Nazareth and what God has done through him. The Church, as the carrier of the Good News means that it is not the task of the Church to condemn those who refuse to accept the Good News "for God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (Joh. 3:17).

It is not ours to deride scoffers for simply refusing to have any dealings with the Gospel. Thus Dodd (in Taylor 1964:47) is correct to say, "Wherever preaching is spoken of, it always carried with it the implication of 'good tidings' proclaimed". The divine admonition is, "Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong" (Ps. 37:1).

The Gospel is for "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one

and only Son" (Joh. 3:18). Ultimately, people should be given the honour to condemn themselves by refusing to believe the Gospel.

However, it is when the question is raised as to how was it possible for the few disciples to preach the Gospel in a greater scale in a short space of time that we find an additional element, other than the power of the Holy Spirit. Carter and Hunt (1983) suggest that the world of Christ's day was ready for the universal Christian mission as no age of mankind had ever been before. We believe, however, that it was the work of the Holy Spirit, making the world ready for the gospel.

From time immemorial, the human race has tried to reach God without success. They developed a deep desire for salvation. They innately felt something was wrong with humankind. Primitive sacrifices on the other hand could not satisfy the felt need. Thus, Carter and Hunt (1983:663) are exactly right when saying:

The world of Christ's day was ready for the universal Christian mission as no age of mankind had ever been before. There was a universal consciousness of the need of a Saviour. All humanistic endeavours to save mankind had proven inadequate and thus man possessed no hope of salvation. There was never a time in the history of the race when the world was more nearly ready to hear the message of universal salvation than at the appearance of Christ and the apostles. There was a general expectancy of the imminent appearing of a world Saviour. Paul revealed his grasp of this world need that was met by Christianity in his utterance to the Galatians: "When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son" (Gal. 4:4).

This does not suggest that the world in which the Gospel was preached easily accepted it. The evidence is that many believed while others did not. Most of the believers suffered because of their faith.

Apostles were jailed and sometimes beaten. But the question now becomes: how ready has the world been for the universal Christian mission since Christ's day? To answer this question we need to consider briefly how the role of the Church as the carrier of the Good News changed from being a civilising agency to one of the major hindrances to the progression of the Gospel.

4.3.2.1 The Church as a Civilising Agency

The Gospel writers put the matter in the centre of God's revelation when they portray Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the Saviour of the world (Mat. 1:21). Generally the Scriptures seem to be acknowledging the fact that many other people did many wonders in God's name. For instance, in the Old Testament Moses performed miracles in the name of Yahweh; Elijah prayed for fire from heaven; Elisha raised the dead. When Jesus came he did all these and many more others (Joh. 20:30-31), but he did not stop right there – he went on to give himself up as a sacrifice of the sin for the world (Joh. 1:29) and became the Saviour of the world. He did much more than any other person did and would do throughout history.

This fact runs as a major strand through the message of the Gospel writers. Matters viewed from this perspective suggest that the presentation of the Gospel centred on the “appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of salvation that is of the life in the Age to come to those who enter the elect community” (Dodd in Taylor 1964:48).

But Bosch *et al* (1980:68) argue that

All this changed after Constantine. The Church consciously assumed the role of a disseminator of culture and a civilising agency...The preConstantine church had not regarded itself as a disseminator of culture. But now the scene was completely changed. Whereas previously all the scholars and cultured people had not been Christians, the upper echelons of society were now predominantly Christian.

This created some pitfalls. Certain cultures, especially European cultures, were equated with the Gospel and missionaries universalised them. Consequently real expansion was no longer occurring among “civilised” Greeks and Romans, but among “barbarian tribes” (Bosch *et al* 1980:68), since they were “qualified” as “Christians” by their cultures. The Gospel became equated with Western civilisation, which was exported throughout the colonial world in the 16th century.

4.3.2.2 The Church and World Religions

We have argued that Jesus looked beyond religion to the fundamental needs of mankind and addressed them. However, the Church took sharp contrasts mainly in the attitudes of Christianity of the day against non-Christian religions; the gods of the “barbarians” were either regarded as demons or “nothing” – a front for satanic powers” (Bosch *et al* 1980:69).

By implication, the adherents of other religions were “demon or devil worshippers”. This may have been the fact. However, the object of the Gospel is not the religions of mankind be they Christianity, ancestral spirits, or non-Christian such as Buddhism, Islam, or African Tradition Religions. Religion is simply a product of a lost heart and not the cause. We have argued that changing a person’s religion does not amount to changing the heart. Approaching matters this way leave much to be said. For instance, Bosch *et al* (1980:70) remind us that:

In the days when the Cape was a Dutch colony, large numbers of slaves were imported from abroad. Often these slaves were freed the moment they accepted the gospel and were baptised, on the principle that a Christian could never be a slave. These baptised slaves were fully assimilated into the church and shared communion with the Dutch burghers. Consequently, it was argued, they should enjoy the same social privileges...

The implication is that things were a lot better if one was a Christian rather than remaining a “pagan”. This amounted to evangelism by coercion. This is the case in which the state power is employed to bend the wills of those considered being recalcitrant and not wanting to embrace “orthodox” faith.

4.3.2.3 Some Hindrances to Effective Evangelism

Green (1990:377-8) points out that churches could themselves be a hindrance to effective evangelism. He argues that:

The problem is that churches are organised for maintenance, not for mission. They are inward looking, and the ministry is expected to

nourish the faithful, not to reach out into the chill waters of contemporary unbelief to draw new members in. ..Ministers are ill equipped for evangelism, but there are other very serious hindrances in the way of churches becoming evangelistic in orientation. Church members are not in good spiritual health. Ask yourself whether it is not the case in your local church that many of the members show scant signs of any vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Church in mission needs to recapture the essence of the Good News and proclaim the Good News. In the same way, the Church in mission needs to look beyond trends of modern life and discern the real fundamental need of the people. Our approach should rather be, change a person and this will change their religion. Only people can change people; life can change life. To save the world Jesus Christ did not give people true information, but gave himself. It is easy to be of the opinion that well thought of and well-delivered sermons change people. However, to change people we have to be with people and not just give them good information about God, Jesus Christ, sin, etc. Salt cannot change the substance at a distance any more than the Church can transform people through good information while keeping its distance.

Being with the people we have to tell them what God has done for us in Christ and what God is doing in our lives now. They would know Christ better when they see the works of the Father in our own lives. We have to share our lives with them, not just give alms.

4.3.2.4 Preliminary Evaluation

We have said that Evangelism is the Good News, and that the Church is the carrier of the Good News. However, although the Gospel is the Good News, it all depends on the way one has to go about spreading it (cf. Lewis 1987). The message must be in the messenger's personality not in his intellectual capacity.

The message may be faultless but the messenger may have some difficulties. This is likely to happen if the messenger knows something wonderful about the Gospel, but has not been transformed by the same. The message is in the intellectual capacity. The information disseminated by the messenger in this case is of secondary nature, it is not personal. It is dry information about God's dreadful judgement, about eternal suffering in fires of hell, and the blessing of eternal life in heaven if one repents.

Naturally, people in this situation are likely to repent, and confess their sins without being in a vital relationship with the Saviour. The motive of repentance has been to avoid torture and suffering in hell. There are many motives for repentance, which we may hardly have time to explore here, but the Good News in this context fails to become the Good News. However, the Good News often becomes the Good News if it is about me, about Jesus and about the hearer.

4.4 The Church in Mission and its Political Mandate

The Church in mission has not defined itself adequately in terms of its political mandate. Therefore this dimension of the missionary mandate of the Church has not developed. However, it remains a fact that social involvement is inescapably political involvement and that the Church lives and performs its missionary mandate in the political sphere either directly or indirectly. Perhaps one reason is that the Church has historically given priority to Evangelism without social involvement. This does not mean that Evangelism does not have a bearing on politics. But as we shall see, it does indeed have an impact on politics.

In order to explicate this topic we shall survey two broad themes: 4.4.1 The Developing Political Mandate and Ideologies, and 4.4.2 The Progressive Political Mandate of the Church

4.4.1 Developing Political Mandate and Ideologies

The political dimension of the mandate of the Church is largely being disputed. There is the apolitical tendency among some Christians who feel that politics and religion are incompatible and reasons are often given for that. Prominent among these is the second coming of Christ who will Himself institute the eternal Kingdom of God (cf Bosch 1991). This group lends credence to the power of Evangelism (Rom. 1:16) but does not believe it could save this generation. This tendency is often driven by the increasing loss of hope for politics to change world affairs.

One major problem often mentioned is that the political dimension of the mandate often divides the Church between “political” ideologies and “political” parties. Owing to *amateurish* and *immaturity* the division itself is not tolerated. It is largely the tendency that the Church regarded the concept of politics at the time as loathsome. Of equal, if not of even greater inconsequentiality, is where the Church is coerced by outside ideological forces to support violent means to precipitate the change of oppressive or colonial socio-political structures through political activism.

The case in point is the 1966 Church and Society Conference held in Geneva on the theme, “Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time” (in Tingle 1992: 18,19). It issued the following quotation comes from a statement made at this conference:

Today, a significant number of those who are dedicated to the service of Christ and their neighbour assume a more radical and revolutionary position... Violence is very much a reality in our world, both the overt use of force to oppress and the invisible violence perpetrated on people who by the millions have been or still are the victims of repression and unjust social systems. Therefore the question often emerges today whether the violence, which sheds the blood in planned revolutions, may not be a lesser evil than the violence, which though bloodless, condemns whole population to perennial despair. It cannot be said that the only possible position for the Christian is one of absolute non-violence... Whenever small elites rule at the expense of the welfare of the majority, political change towards achieving a more just order as quickly as possible, should be actively promoted and supported... in cases where such political changes are needed... the use by Christians of revolutionary methods – by which is meant violent overthrow of existing political order – cannot be excluded a priori.

Few people could hope to find unanimity with a statement of such magnitude among rational Christians, be they European, Asian, Latin American or African. Similar lines of thinking serve to give rise to dispute. This is perhaps where involvement in politics of this nature becomes loathsome and incompatible with the Spirit of Christ. The issue is on the use of violence to settle matters on the ground.

However, there is also an unreasonable form of dispute in engaging the Church in politics. John Stott (1984:10) regarding a dispute of this nature, pointed out that whenever the Church becomes politically embroiled, a howl of protest could be

expected from both within its membership and from outside. "The Church should steer clear of politics," people would cry. "Religion and politics don't mix," they would say.

However, it is not clear what kind of motive is served by assertions of this nature. Is it for the sake of Christianity and the Gospel? Perhaps Peter Hinchliff (1971:192) is justified in having said, "Radical political theology is better than that kind of complacency".

Along these lines Nürnberger (1994:55) rightly argues that:

From the outset, Christians must try to get rid of counterproductive attitudes. The first is a sort of fatalism which believes that faith has nothing to do with politics, or that the world must deteriorate so that the return of Christ may be speeded up, or that our only concern should be the salvation of precious souls in heaven, or that if everybody would just turn to Christ, all problems would solve themselves. All these arguments are rationalisations. They are also akin to the docetic heresy, which says that God is not really willing to deal with the material world. It is also a plain lack of faith and obedience. It leaves the world, which is the object of God's love, to the devil, while in practice enjoying life as long as it lasts.

The 1978 Reith Lectures (in Stott 1984: 12, 13), list at least four warnings which the Church would well to heed. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to reproduce them verbatim:

1. The contemporary church's political *emphasis*, that is, its frequent preoccupation with political issues, tends to eclipse what should be its central concerns, namely the individual, personal redemption, the indwelling of Christ and the eternal (the ethereal qualities of immortality", P2).
2. The contemporary church's political *opinions* are nothing but "the moral and political idealism of the surrounding culture" (P.32), whether this is western bourgeois liberalism or Marxism. All the church does is "tag along, offering a religious gloss" to borrowed ideas. It conforms instead of criticising.
3. The contemporary church's political contribution is *amateurish*; it lacks the necessary expertise to participate.
4. The contemporary church's political *expectations* are naïve, because it tends to forget human fallibility and sin (emphasis not mine.)

In our view the points listed above are valid and could be largely substantiated. Generally some individual Christian churches would opt for an apolitical approach not

because of any of the reasons listed above but out of fear of dividing their own constituency, especially when handling national issues.

Turner (1965:414) noted two incidents in which some Church leaders would not want to involve their churches with issues giving rise to the Civil Rights Movement in USA. They believed the subject of dated race tensions was not a problem among their own people. What these people do not often say, is that non-involvement in politics does not save the Church from the bad state that it is already in.

Some, perhaps, like John Howard Yoder (in Duane Thompson 1983:722), feel that Christians are not responsible for managing the course of history, in part, because of their minority status. From his perspective, this would be sheer humanism. He elaborated further in this manner:

Christians must recognize that they are a minority not only on the globe but also at home in the midst of the followers of non-Christian and post-Christian faiths. Perhaps this will prepare us to see how inappropriate and preposterous was the prevailing assumption, from the time of Constantine until yesterday that the fundamental responsibility of the church for society is to manage it

However, amateurish and immature politics may be, this does not lift the political mandate of the Church. The cure for bad "politics" is not "apolitical" but progressive politics. Niebuhr (in Hinchliff 1982:182) was probably absolutely right when he said,

A Christian who does not care about what actually happens in the political sphere who does not lift a finger to do anything practical about it, is not really a Christian at all.

Nevertheless, care should always be taken that Christianity must not be reduced to state-ideology causing the Church to lose sight of its prophetic calling. Therefore, in view of what has been said, it would be naïve to believe that the silence of some sections of the Church during political unrest meant the legitimisation of violent means employed by the apartheid state on its citizens. How would one arrive deductively or inductively at such a conclusion? If that was the case then what is it today?

4.4.2 Progressive Political Mandate of the Church

We have said that social involvement is inescapably political involvement. It is impossible to remain neutral and uninvolved in politics and enjoy life as long as it lasts. How would the Church have a pastoral role in the community if it tries all its best to shun political questions?

Perhaps the term, "politics" sounds horrific in the ears of some "devout" Christians. But the fact often forgotten may be that those might be the very ones benefiting more from political decisions than anyone else. In South Africa, for instance, things such as social grants, education, security, social relief, and social upliftment and others are processes of political decisions.

To rid the country of politics could just be worse than surrendering the country to forces of chaos. On the other hand, politics may not be valued or devalued on the basis of political officials. These may be just or corrupt or even dictators. But that does not nullify the utility of politics. Hinchliff (1982:184) argues that,

Even the fact that no party may seem in the least concerned about the real good of society does not excuse political apathy. Sloth is a deadly sin, in politics as elsewhere because it may allow evil to win at the polls

On the other hand, the involvement of the Church in politics is not a new field. Historically, the Church used a political mandate to transform the individual with a view to transforming the society. Therefore, the Gospel essentially aims at transforming the individual, not as an in itself, but as a means to transforming society. This does not mean that everything the Church does should be regarded as politics.

To use the words of Venter (1993:64), "We must bear in mind that the political task of the church is not the whole task of the church". The Gospel has its own space and task and so does politics. But when all has been said and done, social involvement by the Church is its inescapable divine task. It is for this reason that the delegates in the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne soberly expressed their penitence saying:

We express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expression of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies a message of judgement upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist

This statement goes a long way in proving that the Church has regained its political mandate. The Church needs to develop further the political dimension of its mandate and use it to communicate the Gospel of Christ to the human race. Perhaps Paul had this in mind when he wrote, "By all means to save some" (I Cor. 9:22).

In view of the climate of political change in South Africa, Venter (1993:65) sees the urgency with which the Church needs be awoken as such:

There is, at this time, a critical and unique responsibility on the church in South Africa to discern and fulfil its political role because of the political transition that South Africa is going through, and has been for years now and because of the historical nature of the crisis that the church was involved in the birth, legitimisation and support of apartheid) and because of the prominent position of the church in our society 78 percent of the population claim to be Christian.

The political dimension of the missionary mandate of the Church should be developed if the Church is to sustain its influence in the reconstruction of society. Hinchliff (1982:182) is correct to say,

The evils of society demand that Christians shall act; political problems require real political solutions; political solutions seldom if ever measure up to Christian ideals; what can be done for imperfectible society must never be absolutized.

Hebrew Prophets in the Old Testament did not fail to stand their ground and championed justice particularly for the poor. To Jeremiah it was said, "See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" (1:10).

Prophets did not do this by writing dissertations, but confronted the situation head-on; they rebuked kings and reprimanded judges and the rich for their dealings with the poor, opposed false prophets and priests and called nations to repentance (cf. Amos, Micah, etc).

Slavery would have been perpetuated for a long time had not Christians like William Wilberforce stood up and fought against the slave trade. It was not enough for him to leave everything in the hands of the government. Bonhoeffer (in Hinchliff 1982:168) is perceptive enough to have said that our role in modern society is a peculiarly difficult one, in that Government is no longer simply a given: we should have responsibility for it. When one has a share, however small, in the genesis and perpetuation of a law, simple obedience to that law does not exhaust one's responsibility towards it. One has an obligation not only to attempt to change it but to refuse to condone it, if one believes it to be immoral.

However, in exercising its political dimension of its missionary mandate, the Church should do more than be concerned about "macro sins" or structural evil, important those may be. We have said that it has to look beyond macro and structural evils and address the fundamental cause. This underlines the words of Monsma (1984:11) who said,

Christians, who have been called by Jesus Christ to be a healing, comforting force in this world, must seek to move beyond merely dealing with the symptoms of oppressive structural evils. Surely Christians are called to minister to the hurting victims of the evil powers loose on this earth. But they must also be sensitive to opportunities to do more than merely give aid to the victims of structural evils; they must attack the evils themselves so that many people never become victims in the first place. If the Christians do not do this, they – as a part of the society and structures that are causing the evils – are in danger of contributing to the very social, economic, or political patterns that are creating additional victims at the same time that they, through act of Christian love and mercy, are attempting to heal the hurts of these victims. As integral members of the society, Christians are often contributing to society's structural evils if they are not fighting against them.

It follows then that Christian involvement in politics should not be for the sake of power but for the opportunity for suffering for justice. Thus, the motive for political involvement should not be dictated by seeking power. Perhaps Tutu's (1982:9) argument has some substance:

So the Christian must always be critical of all political systems, always testing them against Gospel standards. Does this system usurp the place of God? Does the State require an absolute loyalty, a loyalty that deifies it? The State should be obeyed when it remains in its legitimate authority, but there are circumstances when it forfeits the allegiance of its subject. The Christian's ultimate loyalty and obedience are to God, not to a movement or a cause, or a political system...Christianity can never be a merely personal matter. It has public consequences and we must make public choices

For Christians, involvement in politics affords them the opportunity of instilling Christian ideals in a secularised, religious pluralistic society. However, political involvement on the part of Christians and non-Christian should be a matter of moral obligation. Compelling people to be politically involved under the threat that "not to choose to oppose, is in fact to have chosen to side with the powerful, with the exploiter, with the oppressor" (Tutu 1982:9) and this plays into the hands of propaganda.

4.4.3 Preliminary Evaluation

Jesus said that the truth sets free. It follows then that the greatest enemy for the poor is ignorance. Lack of knowledge in the areas of politics could be devastating and expose the poor to manipulation from various angles. It is the task of the Church to be the light of the world; the light not only in evangelism, but also in politics and cultural matters.

However, care should be exercised not to be absorbed into political affairs to the extent of losing one's own soul. Jesus said, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness and all these shall be added to you" (Mt. 6:33). Our political involvement should be for the sake of upholding the values of the Kingdom of God. It is not a move to use legislation or to enforce them. But Christians should uphold the values of the Kingdom of God in a political situation and let society adapt to them on its own pace.

4.5 The Church in Mission and its Cultural Mandate

We have been arguing that the Church has been given a broad mandate the dimensions of which comprise, *inter alia*, a cultural mandate. The cultural mandate of the Church is only a vast area of sustainable investigation that the best we can do in this section is only to attempt to scratch the surface. Therefore, we would refrain from going to the annals of history to review the relationship between the Gospel and culture.

It is also not our desire to present this topic thematically. We believe that issues relating to culture, such as indigenisation, accommodation, inculturation, and other related topics have been dealt with adequately elsewhere (e.g. Wainright 1992; Nida 1968; Shorter 1988; Healey 1992; etc.)

We are only focusing our attention within the culture to issues we deem have a direct bearing on the Gospel, particularly in South Africa. Let us remind ourselves that it is about South Africa about which it was said:

Apartheid has exploited ethnic and cultural differences to create the most demonic forms of oppression. The right to affirm cultural and ethnic identity as well as the right to cross cultural and ethnic contexts are inherent in any free and just society, but demands by any group for favoured treatment must be resisted. The Church has a special obligation to teach mutual cultural and ethnic respect in the quest of a non-racial, non-sexist, pluralistic society. The pluralism of God's creation is to be celebrated as a basis for the larger unity of all people—not as a basis for suspicion and chauvinistic division. Affirming the biblical and African ethos, which teaches that we are only completely human in community with others, we recognise that different ethnic and cultural groups only come to completion in a transcendent humanness given us in God's creation and redemption (Maimela 1987:40)

We are planning to approach this topic through reviewing some documents on mission, including those of World Council of Churches as well as related others on the same issue.

Our purpose in discussing this topic includes broadening our understanding in the holistic mandate of the Church. This will help us to realize more that the Church of Jesus Christ is the means through which God is redeeming the world.

One further reason that warrants consideration of this topic, in addition to what we have stated in the beginning of this section, is the impact that the Gospel of Christ is supposed to have upon human cultures. Another reason is the fact that the Gospel of Christ is mainly perceived as taking a variety of positions in relation to culture.

Perhaps the major reason is the perception that there are some cultural barriers to the communication of the Gospel. In the succeeding sections, we shall consider the nature and some components of culture before tackling the cultural mandate of the Church in Mission.

4.5.1 Nature and Components of Culture

The following statements prove that culture is too complex to define in simplistic terms. People understand different things whenever they think and talk about culture. Jean-Samuel Zoé-Obianga (1998:374) seems to express the majority view for us when describing culture as “part of the human phenomenon. It is the whole body of customs, beliefs, ideas, aesthetic tastes, technical knowledge and skills that allow people to make sense of their lives, of all they relate to or produce”.

Zoe-Obianga’s (1988) description is a functional one in that “whole body of customs, beliefs, ideas, aesthetic taste, technical knowledge and skills ...allow people to make sense of their lives”. In this way, these materials are not ends in themselves. They serve a particular purpose – they allow people to make sense of their lives.

In 1981 the Fifth Conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) (Documents on Mission 1985:235) described culture in functional terms by defining culture as

the foundation of the creativity and way of life of a people. It expresses their worldview, their conception of the meaning of human

existence and destiny, and their idea of God. It includes the historical manifestations of the people's creativity such as their language, arts, social organization, philosophy, religion, and theology itself. Thus religion is culturally conditioned.

Gehman (1989:28) regards culture as "a total plan for living...a way of life of a particular social group that is learned from infancy and is integrated into a functionally organised system. This way of life becomes the way of viewing the world as normal and right".

It is interesting that Gehman (1989) proceeds to identify some components of the culture and make some valuable comments on each of them. Culture includes "material objects" produced by people. This component of culture is relatively easy to change "as people adopt and adapt material things from other cultures" (:28). Culture also includes "patterns of learned behaviour" and "these patterns of learned behaviour are more resistant to change, but do change with time" (:28). The final components of culture "are stubborn in resisting change" and these consist of "the ideas and belief systems of a culture and these deep-seated beliefs go to the core of one's worldview, questions of ultimate values, ultimate destiny, and ultimate explanations of life" (:29). However, it is in regard to this final component of culture, "ideas and belief systems of a culture," that Gehman (1989) does not express himself adequately. One would have hoped that he would at least wrestle with some causes of this "stubborn in resisting change" phenomenon to shed more light on this mysterious aspect of culture.

4.5.2 The Cultural Mandate of the Church

Essentially these statements reflected in the preceding section help more to describe the nature of culture than define it. The sense implied in these statements also suggests that culture is too complex to define in simple terms. The complexity of culture can further be seen in Tinyiko Maluleke's (1996:20) warning to some "African intellectuals and the white academy in South Africa":

African culture, like Western culture, is a concept as vast and as differentiated as the realities it represents. Any attempt to speak authoritatively and conclusively about all of African or Western culture is therefore essentially massive generalising. Often the concept

African culture is used as a foil for Western culture and very rarely vice versa

The whole issue, which we must do our best to avoid, is the polarisation of cultures one another and holding them functionally as a classification tool rather than a way of life adopted by a particular group of people as a response to the context in which they live. Once held as a classifying tool, cultures would not only “serve all kinds of ethnocentrism” but “can often be hostile to one another, each seeking to discredit and destabilise the other” (Maluleke 1996:21). We must acknowledge the existence of cultural differences but not go beyond and glorify one culture as culture above any other. Doing this in itself does not imply idolizing to one’s culture but also reflects poor management of cultural diversity. Instead, as people in different cultures, we need to test and judge our cultures in the light of Scripture (Documents on Mission 1985:127). The approach of Scriptures to the whole context of human beings, as we have seen, is that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). This is in spite of their cultural differences. We did not stop there, but continued in our sinning being unable to help ourselves. The International Congress on World Evangelisation in Lausanne, Switzerland, echoed the same concern in July 1974 when it made its covenant public by saying:

The development of strategies for world evangelisation calls for imaginative pioneering methods. Under God, the result will be the rise of churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture. Because man is God’s creature, some of his culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because he has fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic (Documents on Mission 1985:127).

We are mindful though that Pelagius would have had presented a robust controversy capitalising on the fact that human beings have, unassisted by the grace of God, a moral capacity to live a righteous life free from sin. But if we were to agree with the statement of the Congress, indeed the Church has a special obligation to teach mutual cultural and ethnic respect in the quest of a non-racial, non-sexist, pluralistic society.

One of the ways of doing this is to attempt to analyse the world cultures in terms of their movement to God. Studying the following chart (DIAGRAM 1) will show that cultures strive to universalise themselves by moving up to level f: and level g:

Cultures Movement In Relation to the Glory of God

g

GLORY OF GOD

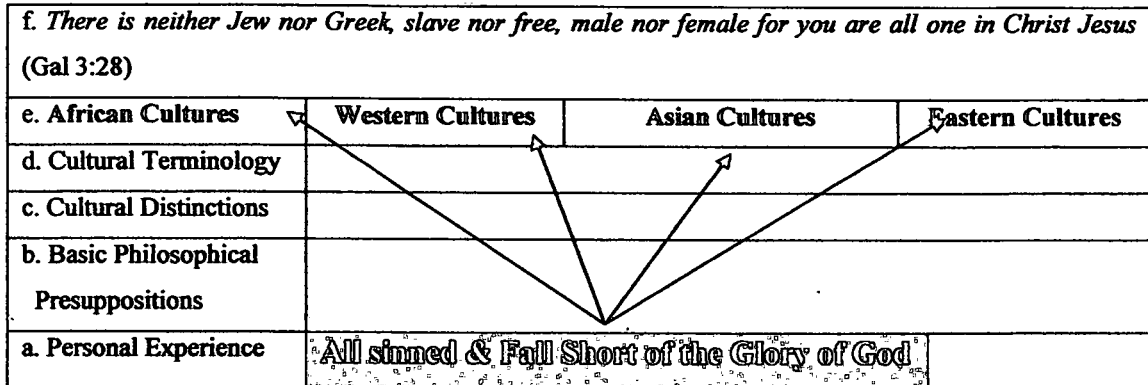


DIAGRAM 2

These divisions and subdivisions above are based largely on different philosophies rather than on different experiences of cultural realities. The role of philosophy in this matter is of importance to our understanding of our own relationship to the cultural mandate.

Level "a": Personal Experiences

People have more or less the same experience of life, be they poor or rich. As human beings, we both experience the good and suffer the bad in every culture under the sun. This does not discount the fact that other cultures are better developed than others.

We simple point to the element of good and bad in every culture. At this level there is no difference between all people, "all sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). This is also the very area often neglected when contrasts between cultures are made (e.g. Dunn, Reglin, Nielson & Deasley 1981). Emphasis in this area will unite people across the cultural diversities.

Level "b": Basic Philosophical Presuppositions

Differences begin to appear as people attempt to explain what they know about their own culture and presume to know about other cultures not their own. What is often

assumed to be self-evident “truths” becomes the framework of our explanation. The problem lies in the fact that people do not agree as to what may constitute basic self-evident “truths”.

The history of the cultural mandate of the Church is in some degree a history of the development and dominance of prevailing philosophies into which particular cultures had been fitted.

Level “c”: Cultural distinctions

Major differences in cultural distinctions become more apparent at this point. This informs in turn people’s cultural consciousness. However, very seldom would a given cultural distinct group consider *Level “a”* as a point of departure. The case in point is the burgeoning of studies on African cultures sometimes in a biblical perspective (see Appendix in Gehman 1989).

Some of these are undertaken with the pure motive of contrasting the Bible with Africans. Gehman (1989) himself draw some sharp contrasts between what he came to term “a biblical worldview” (:28) and what he calls the “holistic worldview of African Traditional Religions” (:55). Generally, dwindling interest in studies of Western cultures in the light of the Bible may be a covert declaration that Western cultures were on par with the biblical worldview. No wonder that the history of mission consists mainly of the dominance of Western cultures into which the Christian faith has been fitted.

Level “d”: Cultural Terminology

The words and terms, which are used by people, are the same. All people talk and are aware about culture, be it Western, African or Asian cultures, etc. In many cases all cultures have a lot in common, be they concepts, or ideas, etc. But each of these is clothed with the inferences and connotations stemming from the basic philosophies of each group – philosophies that are seldom recognised as such but naively considered to be the common heritage of all rational minds.

Communication and understanding seem to be blocked in every encounter between these groups. We often talk past each other instead of engaging in meaningful dialogue. We often accuse each other of dishonesty and bigotry when the truth is that we each speak out of narrow cultural provincialisms which blind us to the provincialism of those to whom we speak.

Level “e”: Cultural Provincialism

We are conscious of our cultural identities doing our utmost to perpetuate our cultural values. The mood is one of drifting toward cultural provincialism. Cultural provincialism is worthwhile because it helps sustain order in a given cultural group. Sometimes cultural provincialism is the result of a clash with modernity, which threatens to sweep away people’s identities from beneath their feet. The reason is, people fear that the loss of identity may degenerate into the loss of meaning.

Similarly to the level above we often undermine one another in terms of our cultural provincialism. The best we do to other cultures is to recreate them in the image of our own. If this level was to be applied to indigenous people in South Africa, for instance, cultural provincialism would manifest itself in terms of races Basotho, Baxhosa, Bapeli, Batsonga, Bavenda, and other tribe.

Even within each tribe “*Liboko* System would apply. *Liboko* System means that within each tribe clans are differentiated, for instance, one talks about Bafokeng, Batšoeneng, Batlounge, Bataung, Bakhokolokoe, etc. when talking about Basotho. The same applies, as we shall see to other nations.

Level “f”: Biblical Cultural Mandate

More emphasis should be placed on this level while at the same time taking into account the realities of levels (b-e). There should be emphasis on the new relationship, which God calls all peoples to. Unlike level “e” in renewed relationship, identity is relativised than absolutized.

God is challenging us to recognise that we are all human beings. This is where everything starts and should inform our faith; and should go on to say we are created from one blood, baptised into one body, clothed with Christ. Wherefore, there is neither Jew nor Greek, nor slave nor free, nor male or female, for you all are one in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

Our brief ensuing discussion on the cultural mandate of the Church should be understood against the background of the illustration we have made. Later on we shall argue that part of the failure of the Church to impact South Africa with the transforming gospel of Christ has been the emphasis on attempting to civilise an African to a level of customs and practices which conform to those of the missionary countries. Here we emphatically wish to point out that no culture, under the sharp light, of the Scriptures could be considered good enough.

The Prophet speaks conclusively when saying, "All of us become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf and like the wind our sins sweep us away" (Isaiah 64:6). To this day the Prophet has never recanted his words.

It is interesting to see how the Prophet includes himself as subject to the crushing hammer of his words when talking about "all of us," "all our righteous acts," and "our sins sweep us". In so doing, he sees the problem of his own nation through his own life.

Consequently it is not what we do as people before the light of God, but what we are, that counts. We are best reflected in what we do. What the Church needs to learn is that the Gospel is not culture and neither could culture be the Gospel. For one thing, the Gospel is from above and culture is from below. In my view, the two are diametrically opposed. We should lead people to Christ just as they are without having them dress out their cultures. Perhaps Mugambi (1998:358) alerts all of us by saying:

As long as superiority and inferiority complexes clog relationships between Christians of various cultures, culture-sensitive evangelism will be impossible. In Christ all social distinctions should become irrelevant – not because they are glossed over but because they are taken seriously. The tragedy of Christian mission is that converts have been moulded not in the image of Christ but in the image of the evangeliser. Both the missionary and the convert become pilgrims

towards the kingdom of God and the distinction between them vanishes when the Holy Spirit binds their relationship

4.5.3 Preliminary Evaluation

Cultures of the world have become idols of nations. They are defended and protected by legislations. We celebrate cultural day and take pride in our cultures. They define who we are and where do we come from. However, the Bible does not only dethrone the idols of this world but also relativises its cultures. Unfortunately, world societies have entrenched their identities into their cultures. Cultures have become sources of tension and tool of classification between nations. It is about my culture, what matters; about who I am!—is the order of the day. Nevertheless, the Bible talks about another culture often referred to as, “in Christ”. Christians are in Christ; their lives are hidden in him. When Christ appears they will be like him. God’s culture is holiness, “Be holy because I am holy”

4.6 The Church in Mission and its Economic Mandate

The economic dimension of the Church is a fascinating focal point of mission; however, it often receives casual attention from mission analysts today. Perhaps this is due to the fact that modern humanity is so confronted with a labyrinth of economical confusion and imbalances that the subject proves too complex to sustain proper investigation. Therefore, this section attempts some ventures into this topic.

On other hand, it is also disconcerting, though, that most matters dealing with economy or economic issues soon degenerate into economical ideologies such as capitalism or communism. However, substantial investigation has been made of the effects of economic imbalances, amongst which poverty featured most in recent investigations. Mission conferences have more than once expressed themselves on the issue of poverty (e.g. Uppsala Assembly of 1968). But until now nothing is concretely happening on the ground. Obviously the question is, why?

On the other hand, the Church has been at pains since the question of dependence of Third World Countries came to the fore. This implies that consideration of economic issues albeit in a tangent way has been going on, reminding one of the 1970s proverbial moratorium debate (Bosch 1991).

In Chapter 5 we will explore the extent to which Third World countries are at a severe disadvantage in relation to economic affairs, and several factors will be investigated here. Now, our primary concern in this section is to show how the economic dimension relates to the comprehensive missionary mandate of the Church. We shall thus briefly explore the topic of this section under the following themes: economic mandate and stewardship; economic mandate and capitalism, and economic mandate and communism.

4.6.1 Economic Concern because of Stewardship

This sub-section is concerned about the loss of the sense of stewardship in relation to material possession. Concerning to this aspect, the Bible addresses itself adequately. For instance, the Bible states clearly that the whole earth with its fullness; the world and all those who dwell in it belong to the Lord (Psalm 24:1). The loss of the sense of stewardship in relation to material possession has plunged the world into economic crisis and created much embarrassment. As Newbegin (1986:110) states:

We live in a world in which millions of people enjoy a standard of material wealth that few kings and queens could match then.

However, Newbegin (1986) seems to have underestimated the world situation, in particular economic conditions in Third World Countries. It is evident that, elsewhere there are those who have more than enough and much to spare, while others, somewhere, on the same earth can hardly afford a meal per day to survive. The Fourth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala, Sweden in 1968 issued a statement that seemed to point to a fact that humanity has not yet discovered its true nature. Part of the report said:

Men can know their true nature only if they see themselves as sons of God, answerable to their Father for one another and for the world. But

because man refuses both the obedience and the responsibility of sonship, his God-given dominion is turned into exploitation, and harmony into alienation in all his relationships. In this condition man, with all his amazing power, suffers an inescapable dread of his own helplessness and his deepest cry, often unrecognized, is the Triune God.

It is significant that mention is made here of "exploitation" and "alienation in ...relationships" not as a cause of misery but as a consequence that of not knowing "their true nature," since they refuse "both the obedience and the responsibility of sonship". Our sense of sonship to God would have entailed empathy and harmony in all our relationships.

But nowhere is the loss of the sense of stewardship better portrayed than in Luke 10 where robbers plundering a man's possession, stripping him of his clothes, beating him up and going on their way leaving him half dead.

They lost the sense of their sonship to God. How different this would have been had they realized their sonship to God. In chapter five relationships between men will be discussed when we consider the indigenous people of South Africa. Before leaving this subject, we need to say a word or two about certain economic ideologies: capitalism and socialism.

4.6.2 Economic Concern because of Capitalism and Socialism

It is not our intention to discuss the merits and demerits of capitalism and communism. We believe that a significant attempt has already been made in this direction (cf. Benson 1969). However, we have to point out that the universalization of these economic ideologies throughout the world by the colonialists has never been beneficial to the majority of people particularly in African countries.

In chapter 5 we will show how the introduction of capitalism in South Africa has often been accompanied by brutality and exploitation. Capitalism and Socialism as economic concepts in themselves have no inherent evil especially if they are of service to humanity; they are only evil when humanity has to made to serve them.

However, capitalism and socialism can be the means through which to absolutize human greediness and selfish human passions and where this happens, materialism as a form of modern idolatry gets the better of humanity. The temptation of idolatry has been reflected in ecumenical circles. Rev. Dr. Hans-Georg Link (1988:45) briefly reports to this effect by saying:

So it can be seen that both in individuals and in groups the notorious temptation of *idolatry* is existing. It was for this reason that the Reformers spoke of the human heart as “forging idols”. And the “production line” was not limited to the religious field. Of course, first and foremost “idolatry” as a category belongs to the phenomenology of religion. Nevertheless, and even in politics, one can everywhere experience the effects of the idolatrous tendency to absolutize a phenomenon of a power of nature, history or human civilization and to elevate it into an ultimate, or into something that gives direction and meaning to life. Everything in the world of humanity, be it destructive or creative, can in this way become an idol, a false god (emphasis not mine.)

Here the “Reformers” seem to have it once more when they point to the human heart rather than to environmental factors. But I believe it is Andrew Carnegie (in Maxwell 2004) who, regarding this point has a significant message worth to record when he said: “No man becomes rich unless he enriches others”. However, it was Barclay (1975:209) who recorded this for consideration:

“The Rabbis had a saying, ‘The rich help the poor in this world, but the poor help the rich in the world to come.’ Ambrose, commenting on the rich fool who built bigger barns to store his goods, said, ‘The bosoms of the poor, the houses of widows, the mouths of children are the barns which last forever.’ It was Jewish belief that charity given to poor people would stand to a man’s credit in the world to come. A man’s true wealth would consist not in what he kept, but in what he gave away.

4.6.3 Economic Concern because of Poverty and Hunger

According to Kim Bobo (1987:14), hunger remains one of the most glaring problems in the modern world today. In an article titled “Hunger” Kim Bobo elaborates briefly thus

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, at least 450 million people in developing countries are malnourished.

Almost half of these people are children. UNICEF refers to the “silent emergence of 40 000 children dying invisibly each day – and millions more living in malnutrition and ill-health – to be just as unacceptable as the more visible crises that move TV viewing audiences on an occasional basis

This is a gloomy picture in the world where there is so much affluence. The Church should study why is it that so many people starve despite the plentifulness of food? How do we live peacefully with our consciences where millions of people are malnourished? Is it because of the scarcity of food? Kim (1987:14) emphatically refutes this by arguing as such:

If food were distributed efficiently, there would be enough food. There is enormous agricultural potential in many famine areas including Africa.

Then what is wrong? One of the problems is the gross mismanagement of the world resources designed to sustain humanity, resulting in the starvation of some and the overabundance of others. Another myth often blamed for hunger is population growth. Nürnberger (1994:54) is of the view that

In many countries population pressure will soon have reached breaking point and the consequences are inestimable. Social turmoil, civil strife, international wars, ecological deterioration, a deeper impact of droughts and floods, ever-more-frequent spates of famine, millions of refugees and other calamities form networks of vicious circles in many poor regions of the world....Population pressure is a crucial ingredient in this syndrome. All advances in productivity seem to be neutralised by the burden which greater numbers of dependent persons place on the economically active.

Nürnberger (1994) seems to be saying that the world resources may be managed responsibly, but “seems to be neutralised by the burden which greater number of dependent persons place on the economically active”.

He acknowledges though that unfortunately the subject of family planning and population control is highly emotional and has politicised issues in many areas of the world. Population control would contribute to the improvement of abject conditions especially in poor countries of the world. Bobo (1987:14) concedes but advances a different view by saying

The rate of increase in population places a strain on countries, but it is not the main problem. In fact many experts believe that only when a country achieves basic food security (when people feel like they have enough food for children and for their aged) will population growth rates actually come down. Another important factor is the declining death rate due to improvement in health and vaccinations.

The cause of hunger is neither laziness nor the fact that life is less important in developed countries than elsewhere. In fact, the majority of people in developing countries work hard. In some rural areas of South Africa women work from sunrise to sunset carrying water, collecting firewood, harvesting food, cooking, cleaning, and raising children. Perhaps a brief reflection on what Wilson and Ramphele (1989:44) have to say will be of interest.

In South Africa the question is particularly poignant. One of the clearest images of the nature of poverty in the country is the sight of a group of elderly black women, each carrying home on her head a load of firewood weighing up to 50 kg, passing underneath the high-tension cables that carry the electric energy between the towns (and farmsteads) of the Republic...But, as various research workers reported to the Carnegie conference, millions of South Africans face enormous difficulties in obtaining the fuel they need for cooking, warmth, and light.

It is obvious from the passage that modern poverty is largely a structural⁶¹ problem rather than of evolution, self-infliction or otherwise. This is obvious from what will be said in the next section.

4.6.4 Economic Concern because of Unequal Land Distribution

We have just mentioned that the problem of poverty and hunger is structural one. We wish to elaborate some more on this issue. The problem of land is a recurring subject in South Africa and one of a complex nature.

From the outset land and land ownership have always posed problems in South Africa. In chapter 5 we will deal further with the land issue. Suffice to point out that the 1913 and 1936 Land Act reserving less than 40% for the occupation by indigenous people of

⁶¹ Inhumane conditions emerging and suffered by some sections of the society as a result of conscious and systematic impoverishment through unjust laws promulgated by the state.

South Africa is a case in point, and that unequal distribution produces instability as well as hunger.

If people in developing countries are to produce more food for themselves they need both land and agricultural investments particularly geared for small farmers. But to do that, people need land to grow their crops. Current moves toward urbanisation in the form of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) merely solves housing problems by sitting people in small holdings but does not address the question of hunger and poverty. Furthermore the concept of RDP itself is superfluous in that it readily presupposes that industrialisation will soon be booming and people will have plenty of jobs or they will themselves become industrialists wherever they are sited usually around big cities.

It is disconcerting that many developing countries owe high debts to foreign banks, governments, and international institutions (Ndungane 2003). Interest payments alone swallow up a large volume of exports from the poorer countries. The recent Jubilee concept has attempted to portray difficulties experienced in developing countries because of repayment of debts. This was well noted by some affluent nations.

However, the cancellation of debts in poorer countries does not seem to be generating much needed currency. On the other hand, the ability of developing countries to trade goods with other countries is a hunger issue because of the impact trade has on jobs in developing countries and their balance of payments. Many jobs in these countries can only exist when trade barriers are dismantled. But when they go up in affluent nations to limit imports, jobs in developing countries are lost and people go hungry.

The problem is that too, often, the motivation towards elimination of hunger and poverty has low priority within some developing countries because of the aid given by richer countries. Currently Government resources are often devoted to the central capital city, to developing sophisticated urban hospitals, not to mention huge amount of money allocated to the changing of colonial names, instead of primary rural health clinics; to food policies aimed at keeping prices low in the cities instead of providing incentives for production, and to constructing superhighways in the capital before paving roads into the countryside. The rich are indeed thinking only for themselves.

The displacement of people, the disruption of planting seasons, and the diversion of resources brought about by wars is a cause of hunger in developing countries. A large number of world conflicts have taken place in developing countries than elsewhere. When this happens people are displaced to nearby countries, creating large number of foreigners being given refugee status in other countries. Some of these are political refugees and others are economic refugees. These instances add to the spread of poverty and hunger.

Apartheid was a major cause of hunger in South Africa. Blacks were systematically placed in low-paying jobs and on poor land. Poverty and hunger among Blacks in South Africa is still high, despite its being one of the richest African nations. Tribalism, although often emphatically denied, exists between Blacks as well. Like Apartheid, it systematically excludes certain Black tribes from fully participating in the resources of a nation. Tribal violence is still experienced in certain parts of South Africa.

The result can mean hunger. We can go on almost indefinitely listing and discussing causes of poverty and hunger in South Africa. The ones listed above merely serve to sustain the fact that poverty in developing country is a structural problem exerted more than self-infliction. Viewed in this order, poverty and hunger become nothing less than a problem related to moral issues.

4.7 Summary and Evaluation

This chapter attempted to urge the Church in mission to be involved in the world by applying itself in terms of most dimensions of its missionary mandate. We have said that the Church has been given an inexhaustive and comprehensive divine mandate to the world, the major dimensions of which comprise, among others, social, evangelism, political, cultural and economic concerns. We have attempted to look briefly at each dimension.

Our study of some dimensions of the missionary mandate of the Church in mission has been motivated by attempts at re-establishing or re-focusing the relevancy of the Church in the 21st century. It was argued that to be relevant to the challenges of 21st century the

Church has to be involved in the world by mobilising itself in terms of the dimension of its missionary mandate.

We have briefly explored the social dimension and pointed how the Church could become involved through its social dimension. The point is that the Church has been commissioned to care for the poor, the broken hearted the captives, the blind and the bruised (Nees 1996).

Unfortunately, the poor, the broken hearted and the captives, etc. are the product of the society. This is because of the illness of the human soul. Our argument centred mainly on the fact that the Church has a relevant message to society only if it could find practical means to communicate the Good News to society. We explored and evaluated several ways in which the Church could become socially involved. Obviously some of the ways were commendable and others not.

A brief survey of the evangelism dimension was made and we pointed out that the main task of the Church is to bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and thus to be the carrier of the Good News. But this changed when the religion of the poor became the religion of the rich during Constantinean era. The task of the Church became to civilise the barbarian. However, we also raised issues that evangelising through civilising merely helped fostered Western culture, which was itself already secularised and relativised. This did not help the cause of evangelism. The fact is that civilisation and evangelism became synonymous.

In so far as non-Christian religions are concerned, we strongly argued that the object of the Gospel has not been to transform people's religions and it was neither to export the Christian faith. The Christian faith may be a true faith in some sense but it does not save; only Jesus Christ, the risen Lord does. Changing people's religion does not always result in changing their hearts.

We have also pointed out that the Church in mission has a political dimension. Arguments were considered relating to the Church's involvement or non-involvement in politics. However, several reasons were raised why the Church should have become involved in politics. The chief of which is its commitment to the poor and since issues

of governance impact largely on the poor, the Church should indeed be concerned with who should lead the country.

In fact, it was argued that the very evils of society demand that Christians act, and a brief elaboration was made of that. However, we must mention that this chapter did not analyse the particulars of politics, but mentioned general ideas that we suggested should apply to the Church.

The cultural dimension of the missionary mandate of the Church is another aspect we have considered in this chapter. We pointed to the fact that the Biblical cultural mandate challenges us to transcend our cultural provincialism and recognise the fact that removed from our cultural insulations; we are all simply human beings, simply creatures of grace.

This does not undermine the realities of cultures. But cultures can be manipulated to foster any kind of solidarity for whatever purpose whether good or bad. Perhaps South Africa is a case in point. The Afrikaner nation mobilised themselves around Afrikaner nationalism to form themselves as a group with distinct Afrikaner values and customs.

Consequently, the Church was affected by cultural provincialism and split into racial divisions. Later on, racism became a problem because of provincial exclusivism. The 21st century is witnessing trends towards African nationalism: "African renaissance," the "Africanisation of Christianity", and others have now become catch phrases. The celebration of the Africa Day is fostering African distinctiveness. Soon African distinctiveness will become a classifying tool serving to exclude other nations.

The economic dimension of the missionary mandate focussed largely on the loss of the sense of stewardship, which often leads to materialism. The economy is there to serve the needs of humankind and not *vice versa*. South Africa witnesses structural poverty because of the unequal distribution of land between races.

Issues of tribalism, nepotism, fraud and other economic crimes against people abound (van Walt 2003). Political ideologies like Marxism and Capitalism are inherently not evil in themselves, as we have Marxist atheists and Capitalist atheists. We also have seen elsewhere that there are as many Capitalist oppressors as Marxist oppressors. It all

depends on the value people are placing on these ideologies. The role of the Church becomes even more urgent in economic circles. The fact is that, "the church is still regarded as a central institution and location of care to the poor, the marginalised, the homeless and the unemployed" (August 2000:50).

Up to now we have been dealing with the missionary mandate of the Church. The previous chapter considered the nature of the Church and made some brief notes on the missionary mandate of the Church. This chapter focused on some dimensions of the missionary mandate of the Church and attempted to show that the relevancy of the Church today depends on the willingness of the Church to mobilise itself in terms of the dimensions of its missionary mandate. This has helped to answer the question, *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa.* The next chapter focuses on the indigenous people of South Africa. We would like to find out how the emergence of indigenous religious trends impacts on them and, if the Church is a vehicle of transformation, how it will go about dealing with them.

CHAPTER 5

The Church in Mission: Indigenous People of South Africa

5.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to describe indigenous people of South Africa in the light of emerging indigenous religious trends. The rationale for studying this theme arises from the fact that some elements of emerging indigenous religious trends, such as Black Theology, emerge from Black experience, and they are not only concerned about Black suffering in South Africa, but also encompass “the whole area of African culture and religion, challenged and transformed as it is through three centuries of contact with Western cultures” (Kritzinger 1989:80). It is therefore, necessary that we should reflect briefly on the very nature of the Black experience concerned and this could not be discussed in isolation from indigenous people of South Africa. Furthermore, the rationale for studying the topic of this chapter arises from the objectives of this study, namely, *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa*. Therefore, brief mention of the indigenous people of South Africa is in order.

However, in discussing this topic, it would not be our intention to review the history of South Africa. Efforts will be made to examine their socio-religious setting. The data presented here largely arise as a result of my wider exposure to some African cultures in general and to ancestral religion in particular. My parents were adherents of ancestral religion, and during her lifetime my grandmother was *n'anga ya tinhlolo*⁶² or medicine woman. I have personally have witnessed instances where my parents invoked the ancestral spirits, and recall the manner in which they used to address them. I have also been present at ceremonies (usually accompanied by a drum performance) in honour of the ancestral spirits; and on at least one occasion I addressed ancestral spirits in my personal capacity.

⁶² Literally meaning medicine women using divining bones.

Generally, I will attempt to stay within the limits of my personal observation of the African life and tradition. However, I must admit that my presentation here, although I tried to stay as objective and unbiased as I could, is more or less tinted by my own strong Christian convictions, which I could hardly limit in absolute terms. I strongly believe in the uniqueness of Christ as the only true way to God. But I have also made some use of representative sources of authorities in the field to state my own case.

In what follows, attention will be given to indigenous people of South Africa. These are the central focus of our study. We would like to discover *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa*. References will be made to indigenous people of South Africa and culture; indigenous people of South Africa and religion, as well as indigenous people of South Africa and politics.

5.2 Indigenous People of South Africa: A Brief Survey

An exhaustive historical review of indigenous people in South Africa is a vast undertaking which is far beyond the scope of this study. The following survey sketches just the broad concepts, which attempt to characterise the indigenous people in South Africa. To achieve this we shall draw attention to some values inherent in African culture. However, sketches such as these are not only simplistic but also controversial since indigenous people are multicultural in their outlook. This makes it hard to quantify their culture because of its comprehensiveness and its vastness.

Our only aim in offering this sketch is to create the context in which we have to develop our missionary approach that would help to provide some answers to our initial question, *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa*. We will first consider indigenous people and culture.

5.2.1 Indigenous People of South Africa and Culture

In discussing the culture of indigenous people of South Africa we will limit ourselves to the extent to which it has been “challenged and transformed...through three centuries of contact with Western culture” (Kritzinger 1989:80). The succeeding sections attempt to define and discuss the subject of indigenous people of South Africa with reference to their culture, religion, politics, nationalism and globalisation.

5.2.1.1 Indigenous People of South Africa

By indigenous people, we mean people who resided in South Africa long before the arrival of Western nations and other nations on the southern tip of the continent of Africa. Indigenous people of South Africa consist of many ethnic groups with each group having its own unique characteristics in language, customs, etc. There are Zulu, Swazi, Xhosa, Basotho, Batswana, Batsonga, Bavenda, Amandebele, Bapedi, and San communities.

Amongst themselves, indigenous people ethnically differ from each other in many significant ways, this in spite of their being more or less of same colour. While linguistic differences are significant, there are also some differences at the level of customs and legal systems. Consequently, for many centuries South Africa has been multicultural – the fact giving rise to the multiplicity of legal systems in this country (cf. Labuschane 2002). Nonetheless these ethnic groups, different as are, they share a unique common religion, the veneration of ancestral spirits.

5.2.1.2 Indigenous People of South Africa and Culture

As far as their individual cultures are concerned, indigenous people are proud and feel good about their cultures and would love to perpetuate customs to the next generation, sometimes through storytelling. Perhaps one example will suffice here. The Basotho, often use the *Mantlatilane* tradition to teach the young generation the clan name called *liboko* (cf. Matšela & Moletsane 2006).

Although there are some noticeable differences among the cultures of the indigenous people, there are also some noticeable common features. Generally indigenous cultures tend to represent sets of values promoting strong community-hood and extended family ties. They value the community more than the individual. Collectivism is more important than individualism. This is apparent from expressions such as "*Lentšoe ke la sechaba*" meaning what the community say weighs much more than what an individual might say. This does not mean that people as individuals do not matter among indigenous people; however, they are always being regarded as members of the community also being accountable to it. Individuals receive the degree of honour corresponding to their contribution to the wellbeing of the community.

Beside valuing the concept of community and extended family, indigenous people value, *inter alia*, marriage, children, property, religion and death.

A. Indigenous People of South Africa Value Marriage

Marriage, especially traditional marriages is highly respected among indigenous people. The *lobola* custom is a highly respected institution in indigenous traditional marriages. Unlike civil marriage, traditional marriage links not only individuals involved but also their families. Although polygamy is a common practice, it is now declining rapidly among indigenous people. This is partly due to the influence of Western cultures and the Christian faith. However, vestiges of this practice are still maintained and sometimes encouraged⁶³ in some African Indigenous Churches (AICs). This is a situation in which a man would have more than one wife. Previously the wives lived in one homestead but in different houses called *lapa* in Sepedi or *ndyangu* in Setsonga. These days, wives may or may not live in the same place with their husband.

⁶³ I visited the wedding ceremonies held by International Pentecostal Holiness Church in Zuurbekom near Johannesburg. The presiding minister referred to Isaiah 7 to justify polygamy.

B. Indigenous People of South Africa Value Children

In most instances, the purpose of indigenous marriage is procreation. Marriages are not taken as an end in themselves. Infertility in marriage is often perceived as a disease to be cured by all means. Children, especially male children, are highly valued. This does not mean that female children are undermined. The fact is that male children perpetuate the name of the clan from one generation to another and thus stay within the ranks of the family, while female children take the name of the husband's family in marriage. Those outside the culture may often mistake this merely as form of patriachalism, which in fact it is not.

Indigenous people educate their young by means of folklores, selecting fairy tales that would convey high moral values in the community. Different folklores still abound among indigenous people. There are folklores designed to educate the young to take care of the old; some designed to restrain them from stealing from someone else; and still others designed to appreciate hard work. Others are designed to encourage mutual assistance, etc. To this end Bedwell (1953:20) is correct in saying that "The Bantu were superior in every way. They were well disciplined in battle and they could smelt iron ore long before the white men came. They also cultivated the ground and grew corn.

C. Indigenous People of South Africa Value Community

Generally, indigenous cultures tend to represent sets of values promoting community-hood and extended family. Indigenous people are community conscious as we have seen and they value the concept of community. They are "characterised by a strong group consciousness and communal solidarity. The people usually decide and act as a group" (Seamands 1982:185); and "decision making is based on *social consensus*. This consensus includes those of the deceased. Once consensus has been reached, no opposition can be tolerated; individuals sacrifice their own initiatives to *social harmony*" (Nürnbergger 1996:220; emphasis not mine.).

People as individuals find their meaning and their worthiness in the context of the community in which they reside. Without the community individuals lose their meaning

and, so to speak, their roots. This is comprehensive in the sayings, *Motho ke motho ka batho*. (An individual is a person because of the community), and *Morena ke morena ka sechaba* (A king becomes a king only because of the community). Moreover, the community decision is final. This is often expressed in the saying, *Letšoele ke poho* (The community is a bull), one cannot resist it.

However, certain features are readily associated with indigenous people. But like any other people of the world in their unregenerate state, normally indigenous people have a good and kindly disposition and are usually too mindful to offend nature and other people, especially strangers. They are receptive and considerate. This means that in the main they are not too assertive in character; and “*disturbances in social relationship* are avoided at all cost” (Nürnberger 1996:220; emphasis not mine.).

This good and kindly disposition toward people and nature is generally known among themselves as *ubuntu/botho*. *Ubuntu/Botho* describes people in an ideal state in which they strive to maintain harmony between themselves and with nature itself. The sense of *ubuntu/botho* drives indigenous people to design ways and means to deal with poverty, widowhood, and other social problems. (cf. Laubschagne 2002).

Hereditary kings rule the community, and they are called paramount chiefs since the arrival of colonialists. They are called paramount chiefs because colonial governments deprived them of some kingly prerogatives, such as enforcing the death penalty and other powers. Under the paramount chiefs are other lesser chiefs, also hereditary. They help the kings to rule their lands and are their councillors. They are called *izinduna/marena* or headmen. Their position is usually hereditary, but as no unpopular man would be appointed they have the status of being elected representatives of the people. In some cultures these are the ones who speak to ancestral spirits or to the high God on behalf of their people.

It is desirable among indigenous people that the king shall command and be a custodian of morality and respect. Kings are symbols of authority. They preside over difficult matters brought to them from *izinduna/marena* to make final decision, and they are to create conditions of peace and maintain peace and tranquillity in the community.

Although kings are noted for their supposed powers to make rain they are not worshipped in indigenous cultures. The queen mother keeps the sacred rainmaking medicines. The king is usually referred to as "*Morena*" meaning "Lord" or "*Tau-tona*" or the "King-Lion".

D. Indigenous People of South Africa Value Property

Land is very sacred, as we have seen. It belongs to the ancestors and is held in trust by the king. He approves the allocation of lands to his subjects. There are no systems of land ownership. Land is there to be used and not to be owned. Indigenous people worked their land in group schemes called *letsema* or a group of people working together as a team. Central to this is the social drink called, *joala* or beer. This was usually made of sorghum corn and is highly intoxicating. At the end of the day's work, *letsema* people will usually gather and unwind through beer drinking. Here, they will be singing and dancing and chatting while planning for the work in the next morning. As we shall see, the drink is also used as a libation to communicate with ancestral spirits. The heads of families usually offer a party to the ancestral spirits at which ritual sacrifices are made. This is called, *mpha-badimo* in Sesotho or *ku phahla swikwembu* in Setsonga. Religious pluralism was unknown and indigenous societies were characterised by common beliefs (cf. Nürnberger 1984).

E. Indigenous People of South Africa Value Culture

Culture is a very important subject as far as indigenous people are concerned. This is often reflected nowadays in radio and Television and regular national festivals across the country, especially the Heritage Day. As we have mentioned elsewhere, Radio Talk-Shows such as *Lenaka la Motheo* in *Lesedi FM* (SABC. Sotho Broadcasting Service) and *Re Suga Thari* in *Motsweding FM* (SABC. Tswana Broadcasting Service) are aimed at educating the young and re-educate older Africans about their traditional ways of life respectively called *Mekhoa ea Basotho* (Sotho culture) and *Ngwao tsa Batswana* (Tswana culture).

Some African experts are often invited to make presentations on those Shows during which calls are invited from interested listeners to make comments or ask questions. Telephone lines are often congested because of huge interest in learning more about African traditional ways of life.

Central to the African ways of life, however, is indigenous religions, the religions of the forefathers. Here again, SABC Television programmes such as *Lentswe la Batho*, Sotho/Tswana/Sepedi on TV 2; *Ipfi la Vhatu/Rito ra Vanhu* Venda/Tsonga on TV 3 and *Izwi labantu* Zulu/Xhosa/Ndebele and Swati on TV 1, are also dedicated to inform Africans about their traditional ways of life. South Africans observe Heritage Day annually. During the celebrations of this day, the tone is one of reliving the traditional way of life in Africa. The impact that these programmes and activities have upon the Christian Church, especially among indigenous Africans is reflected by constant encouragement of the practice of ATR in their churches.

5.2.2 Indigenous People of South Africa and Religion

This is the area demanding an extended investigation. One of the chief reasons is that it is believed that the lives of indigenous people revolve around religion (cf: Mbiti 1969), especially the ancestor cult. It is the area believed to constitute the worldview of an African (cf. Seamands 1982; Gehman 2005). Moreover it is the ancestor cult which is thought to have been the toughest obstacle missionaries had to contend with after members of indigenous people had received the Christian faith, usually with no remarkable success (Bedwell 1953).

Indeed, a number of instances have been mentioned by commentators to explain that religion, and the ancestor cult in particular, is central to indigenous people in South Africa (Junod 1927; Mbiti 1969; Seamands 1982; Setiloane 1986; Kiernan 1995; Gehman 1989; 2000).

Although religion, and especially ancestral religion, is central to indigenous people, it is not and has not been systematised into a set of beliefs and values (Gehman 2005). There is hardly any African Traditional Religion theology known among ordinary people. African Theologies as we shall see are creations of some individual African intellectuals

somehow trying to establish certain beliefs associated with ATR. But ATR is too immense to be condensed into a book. It consists of rational and irrational factors which might make some intellectuals reluctant to record them. Its sources include dreams.

The point here is that the majority of ordinary indigenous people hardly have anything to do with religious intellectualism. Unlike the Christian faith, relevant people among indigenous people as far as religion is concerned, are not intellectuals, or the academic community, but ordinary people such as *inyangas*, traditional medicine men, and women, *izangomas*, etc., regardless of the state of their literacy.

The exodus of the indigenous academics world from the Christian faiths and other world faith into the centre of the circles of indigenous religion is a new trend (Gehman 2005). Part of the move is the fruit of the rise of African consciousness and African nationalism.

But, since African consciousness and African nationalism give impetus to modern trends in African thought, it is worthwhile investigating the ramifications of the development of interest in ancestral cults in an attempt to address the question, *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa.*

In what follows, we shall study the ancestor cult and how it relates to emerging indigenous religious trends. Special attention will be devoted to the role of ancestral spirits since this area often escapes the attention of most investigators. Therefore, in the following sections we shall summarise our study in the following themes: 5.2.2.1 Indigenous people and the Ancestor Cult; 5.2.2.2 Characterisation of the Ancestor Cult; 5.2.2.3 the role of Ancestral Spirits in Ancestor Cult; 5.2.2.4 Indigenous People and Concepts of Evil, and 5.2.2.5 Indigenous People and the Concept of the Supreme Being.

5.2.2.1 Indigenous People and the Ancestor Cult

The words "ancestor cult" may be a misnomer. To say the least, the religion in question has not reached the cultic stage⁶⁴. It has no objective set of values and belief system distinguishing cults. It was not for nothing that in some respects the religion under investigation was not even considered as religious (Hammond-Tooke 1994). Early pioneer missionaries to Africa could not observe anything in it that they could associate with religion.

Instead, there is a wealth of evidence that before European nations arrived, Africans were quite religious. The words, "ancestor cults" are used here because of the trends this religion is assuming. However, for the sake of convenience, we shall hereinafter use African Traditional Religion or ATR to denote ancestor cult.

5.2.2.2 Characterisation of ATR

In this section we shall see that although ATR is not a homogenous religion, yet there are principles common to the entire ATR world.

A. ATR not a Homogenous Religion

ATR is not considered a homogeneous religion since there are as many internal varieties as there are ethnic tribes among the Bantu speaking people themselves. Even here, not only does each tribal society express itself in its own distinctive religious forms but also in terms of its individual clan. For instance, in the Bapedi tribe one may distinguish ATR according to the clans: *Babina-Tlou*, *Babina-Tau*, *Babina-Noko*, *Babina-Tšoene*, *Babina-Shoro*, *Babina-Khomo*, *Babina-Phuti*, etc. Now, to understand what is going on in these names, one has to be familiar with the concept of taboos. For example, the

⁶⁴ Dunn et al (1981:80) characterises a cult as follows: "A cult is a separate religious group or movement whose main preoccupation is an esoteric belief or a special and mysterious form. But beliefs often include an element of secrecy, and outsiders are excluded from the cult esoteric knowledge. Because of its special emphasis, the cult attracts people who are isolated from the community; it is relatively structureless, its unity stems from participation in ritual or intensive communication of the special doctrine."

Babina-Tlou have a set of taboos distinct from those of *Babina-Tau*; *Babina-Phuti* distinct from those of *Babina-Shoro*, etc. Nevertheless, there are taboos common to all clans. It can be seen even at this point, that Africans have multiple worldviews.

Much of what has already been studied, written and publicised about ATR, however, is mainly based upon certain common principles and features that run through the entire ATR world. Some studies (e.g. Setiloane 2000) are reluctant to enter into the area of African beliefs and practices. That makes it difficult to study some relevant aspects of the ATR closely since they have often only studied in generalised or comparative forms. We shall now look at some common principles believed to be common to or underlying the entire ATR world.

B. Some Principles Believed to be Common in the ATR World

Geoffrey Parrinder (1961) divides the subject into four parts or components: 1) The Supreme Being; 2) The chief divinities, including non-human spirits; 3) The divinized ancestors, and 4) The charms and amulets. E. Bolaji Idowu follows the same pattern except that he treats divinities and spirits separately (Idowu 1973:139). John Mbiti in his book, *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969), divides the subject as follows: 1) The Supreme Being; 2) Spiritual Beings, Spirits and the Living-Dead; 3) Mankind, including the cycle of life; 4) Specialists; 5) Mystical Power, Magic, Witchcraft and Sorcery; 6) Evil, Ethics and Justice.

In analysing the ATR Edward G. Newing (in Seamands 1982), former Australian missionary to Kenya suggests five principles of the African culture. He isolates the following: (1) the holistic view of life, (2) the spiritual view of life, (3) the mythical view of life, (4) the ritualistic expression of life and (5) the cyclic view of life. These different principles are related, forming a single complex system. Concisely ATR is more than just a religion it is a complex worldview of indigenous people. ATR is simply a tiny aspect of the worldview, yet it permeates the whole.

Gehman (2000) reduces all these principles to three. He suggests that ATR is "composed of three basic components: belief in the Supreme Being, the spirit world

(spirits subordinate to the Supreme Being) and mystical powers” (Gehman 2000:xi). Schematically this could be represented as follows

Characterisation of ATR

Parrotander	Idowu	Mbiti	Newing	Gehman
Supreme Being	Supreme Being	Supreme Being	Holistic view of life	Supreme Being,
Divinities	Divinities	and the Living Dead	Spiritual view of life	Spirit world
Divinized Ancestors	Divinized Ancestors	Mankind	Mystical view of life	mystical powers
Charms & Amulets	Charms & Amulets	Specialists	Ritualistic view of life	
	Spirits	Mystical Power	Cyclic view of life	
		Evil, Ethics and Justice		

DIAGRAM 3

Gehman (2000:xi) further observed that

Throughout Africa different people emphasise one of those elements. Some, for instance the Murle of the Sudan, emphasise the Supreme Being, while others like the Zande, focus on magic and mystical powers. Many Bantu such as the Akamba focus on ancestral spirits...Thus each of the African peoples has its own religious flavour, emphasising one or the other of the three main components of ATR.

5.2.2.3 Nature of Ancestral Spirits

Central to ATR in South Africa are the ancestral spirits. We have selected the Batsonga traditional religion as representative. We shall see the extent to which ancestral spirits feature in indigenous people taking the Batsonga tribe as an example. However, we shall also refer to the Basotho religion and other tribes if necessary to clarify our point. Initially, we shall draw attention to the nature of ancestral spirits, and then look briefly at the titles they are given.

A. Ancestral Spirits as Immortal Remains of the Dead

Ancestral spirits are believed to be the spirits of the departed ones, generally denoted as *swikwembu*. *Swikwembu* are often names held in the plural form to indicate that ancestral spirits are groups of communities in their social structures.

There is little evidence corroborating the fact that ancestral status was not automatically accorded to everybody who dies, and that it could vary in the value placed upon it since it was conferred by the living and ultimately depended on their continued willingness to honour it (Kiernan 1995:20; Hammond-Tooke 1989).

Generally the view has been taken that leaders of the clan were usually the ones designated the status of *swikwembu* or ancestors. But such a view often overlooks common belief that during their lifetime each person is regarded as having (being possessed by) their personal *swikwembu* or to have the *swikwembu* of the clan. Hence it is not strange to talk about your own personal ancestors as "*swikwembu swa wena*" a point to which we shall return to shortly; or to talk about the ancestors of your clan as "*swikwembu swa ka n'wina*". Often *swikwembu* are invoked and addressed in the plural. Only in isolated instances one may one address a certain ancestor.

The rationale of belief that one survives death by being translated into a member of the ancestors' communities finds expression in the Batsonga's view of human being. Generally, Batsonga hold to the trichotomic view of human nature. Human beings consist of the body (*mmirhi*), the spirit (*moya*) and *ndzhuti*. *Ndzhuti* may be regarded as the person's complex unique characteristics. The *Basotho* understand it as the *seriti* or vital force (Setiloane 2000). The body is believed to be mortal (*ku lova*). But the *moya* and *ndzhuti* survive death (*hanya*). The surviving remains are called *swikwembu*. This can be illustrated graphically as below:

Trichotomic view of the Batsonga

<i>Swikwembu</i> (Ancestral Spirits)		
<i>Mmirhi</i> (body)	<i>Moya</i> (spirit)	<i>Ndzhuti</i> (vital force)
Incapable of surviving death	Capable of surviving death	Capable of surviving death

DIAGRAM 4

Although *ndzhuti* also survives death at the end of one's life, it is commonly assumed that an individual may destroy their own *ndzhuti* by leading immoral lives, such as not respecting the elders, being cruel and inconsiderate, stealing, telling lies, etc. At death the remains of such an individual falls under a certain group of ancestral spirits – the subject to which we shall return to shortly.

Swikwembu do not only have human characteristics, but are also said to keep their individuality perpetually. They are generally considered highly emotional and quick to take revenge. They can be angered and thereby can bring calamity to their own descendants, especially when their instructions are not carried out. This is why they are feared among indigenous people.

The belief in the immortality of *moya* and *ndzhuti*, on the other hand, gives rise to the sense of duty on the part of the living. *Swikwembu* have to be cared for in return for protection from evil, prosperity and longer life on earth. Batsonga elders would often talk about the custom relating to the need to have due regard to the *swikwembu* (*ku xixima ndzhuti wa va khale*).

Basically the term “*swikwembu*” has often been translated as “the gods” (Turaki 1999). Another name given to ancestral spirits is “old people” (*vhanhu va khale*) or simply *va khale*, the ancestors. A person may thus be referred to as having the spirit of the old people (*ku va na moya wa va khale*). It is also common to refer to the spirits as *la'vakulukumba*, meaning the elders. Other names referring to the ancestral spirits include: *la'vanga wisa* those who have gone to rest, or *la'vanga etlela*, those who are sleeping. Another rare name sometimes used is, *la'vanga ha ri ki kona*, those who are no longer with us or amongst us. Although these names are frequently used, yet in general the dominant name remains *swikwembu* while other names could also refer to those who are still alive.

B. Ancestral Spirits and Procreation

Although *swikwembu* are believed to retain human characteristics perpetually, the question as to whether *swikwembu* marry or not does not apply except that they are objects of worship (*ku tirhela va le hansa hi ku va nkhinsamela*). However, there are

some instances in which a person may be regarded to have become involved in marriage with the ancestral spirits. Terms such as *n'wingi wa swikwembu* denoting "ghost marriages", (Junod 1927) are prevalent among indigenous people. This may suggest that ancestral spirits marry the living.

C. Ancestral Spirits as Capable of Ownership

Ancestral spirits may also own property among the living. They may own a house, "*xindlwana xa swikwembu*"; clothes, *miceka ya swikwembu*; animals, for example cattle or goats, *homu* or *mbhuti ya swikwembu*; a place designated for their worship or point of contact, *gandzelo*; utensils, *khowana ra swikwembu*; person, *mhunhu wa swikwembu*, etc. Later on we shall have more to say persons belonging to ancestral spirits. At the moment we are concerned about the capacity of ancestral spirits to own property. Indigenous people believe that land belongs to the ancestors and is held in trust by the king. Property belonging to ancestral spirits such as divining bones or *tinhlole*, and *njheti*, etc., is always held in extreme awe.

Although *swikwembu* are invisible, the spirits may have some representatives either in human form or in animal form. Usually the elders of the clan would consult together and designate one person among them or give a child the name of one of the persons who died many years ago. Persons carrying names of ancestors assume a leadership role, which used to be that of the dead person while still living. Such people enjoy more or less the same respect and honour that used to be accorded the dead person while still living. They are often consulted for advice, or are asked to decide matters in case of conflict among members of the clan and their decision is final.

Their word often carries much weight. The term, "*Kokwana*" or "great grand" often prefixes their names, for example, *Kokwana Mihloti*; *Kokwana Mabhanti*, simply meaning great grand *Mihloti* or great grand *Mabhanti*. *Mihloti* and *Mabhanti* being the first names of dead persons, surnames are not used.

Persons carrying the names of the dead may also consult ancestral spirits on behalf of the clan or a family. Therefore, the view often taken, that those leaders of the clan,

heads of the families or medicine people are the only ones who consult ancestral spirits on behalf of the clan or families, is not conclusive.

An animal may also represent certain ancestor. Within a herd of cattle or a flock of goats either one of the bulls or a he-goat may, just like an instance mentioned above, be given the name of a person who died many years ago. Instructions are given for animal not to be mistreated or insulted. To mistreat it or insult it is tantamount to mistreating or insulting persons after which animals bears their names.

Doing so would be equivalent to showing disrespect to the ancestor whose name is borne by the animal. When a problem arises in the family – such as sickness, recurring visions often of an uncomfortable nature, suffering, etc., members of the family may rise early in the morning and enter the kraal, taking with them a calabash full of sorghum beer, or the remains of sorghum beer after having been strained, snuff or a handful of maize meal.

The animal in question will be surrounded and the problem will be narrated whilst carefully pouring drops of beer and pinches of snuff, etc., on its back. Often when the animal vibrates its back during the process a round of applause ensues as this is a strong indication that concerned ancestral spirits have taken note of the problem and that everything will be all right. This practice is prevalent largely among the Shona tribe, but it is being practised in some tribes of indigenous people in South Africa as well.

However, this is not always an easy task as animals do not always vibrate their back in response to what happens regardless of the amount of liquid poured on it. In such cases, conditions may sometimes require that different people in the group take turns to assume the role of narrator and the lucky one may eventually induce the vibration of the back of the animals by continually pouring liquids on its back. If all members of the group have taken their turn and still the animal does not vibrate its back, this implies that the concerned ancestral spirits have not approved the request. In response, the family may severely criticise him.

D. Some Major Groups of Ancestral Spirits

Junod (1927) studied ancestral spirits among the Batsonga. His study (1927:371) reveals that, "There are many categories of ancestral spirits...since everyone becomes a spirit at death, most important categories being those of the family or tribe. Among these are both matrilineal and patrilineal ancestors⁶⁵."

Among the major groups of ancestral spirits the following have been identified: spirits of those who died in the battle, *swikwembu swa mathhare*, and spirits of those who died unnatural deaths, such as by drowning or suicide or having been devoured by wild animals. The spirits of pregnant women whose unborn children were not removed before the women's burial are included in the latter category and are called *swikwembu swa shibiti* or spirits of bitterness.

Children who died before reaching puberty are understood to become part of the numerous and much feared *swikwembu swa nhova* or spirits of the bush. Other groups include the spirits of those who died in foreign countries who therefore cannot be traced, *swikwembu swa mashavi*, or the spirits of other tribes, *swikwembu swa Mandau*. Describing the control exerted by each of these groups on the living would be beyond the scope of this study. In the following section we will limit ourselves to common roles believed to be performed by ancestral spirits in the community.

5.2.2.4 The Role of Ancestral Spirits

The role of ancestral spirits is very extensive and too complex to understand. Different groups of spirits assume different roles in the lives and the affairs of the living. Generally, it is held that (a) *Swikwembu* look after the welfare of their descendants; (b) *Swikwembu* may possess people; (c) *Swikwembu* may manifest themselves through people; (d) *Swikwembu* enjoy fellowship with people, and (e) *Swikwembu* are mediators between Supreme God and the living

⁶⁵ The fact that everyone becomes a spirit at death must be understood circumspectly. It may be that everyone becomes a spirit at death but not is every spirit being venerated or worshipped. Some indigenous people elect from among the dead the spirit of one whom they would want to worship or venerate. Usually, the heads of the clan are the ones being venerated as objects of consultation (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1994).

A. *Swikwembu* Look after the Welfare of their Descendants

As we shall see, indigenous people are conscious of the evil in the world, and sometimes they suffer from evil themselves. Some forms of evils are beyond their powers to deal with, and so they would resort to asking protection by ancestral spirits. Ancestors are believed to look after the welfare of their descendants and they expect their cooperation in return.

They have power both to provide for and protect the living. They are generally seen as benevolent guardians and protectors of the people. Kiernan (1995:22) describes the supportive role of the ancestors when saying:

Ancestors inhabit a world of spirit in which they are endowed with the capacity to influence mystically the orderly life of the group or the individuals for whom they assume structural or instrumental significance. In religious terms, their function is to be supportive and protective of the living, to ensure an ordered and fruitful existence for them. As long as ancestors fully discharge their assigned role, their descendants should enjoy a life of peace and prosperity, and neither would have reason to reproach the other or, indeed, take more than occasional notice of the other.

Swikwembu do not only assume a protective role in their descendants' lives but also assume the role of unifying members of the clan. Like a tree without deep roots in the ground blown down by the wind so is a clan without ancestral spirits. It will disappear and its members will be scattered. In this case, ancestral spirits unify extended indigenous families and hold them together. They communicate with the living through dreams, visions, sometimes using sickness or suffering to draw the attention of the living to a particular duty the living need to perform on behalf of ancestral spirits.

B. *Swikwembu* May Possess People

Although nearly everyone believes that each person (to be possessed by) has *swikwembu* yet not all are possessed by the ancestral spirits (*moya wa swikwembu*) to the same degree; it is a fact that different people may be possessed by different groups

of ancestral spirits, as we have seen. For a person to be possessed of *moya wa swikwembu* should have undergone the *ku cineriwa* custom and this is the process through which a person is inducted into a particular ancestor's spirit or ancestral spirits to be used by them.

But *ku cineriwa* may also refer to female circumcision. Often the *ku cineriwa* custom among the Batsonga may be preceded by odd preliminary events such as one experiencing recurring visions or strange dreams of certain members of *la'vakulukumba* senior elders, or suffering from frequent bouts of physical illness suspected to be caused by the ancestral spirits.

A person may also be inducted into the system because of hearing strange voices. Most people experiencing one or a combination of all of these are often advised by the elders to consult traditional healers (*tin'anga*). In some instances, *tin'anga* may be consulted on behalf of the affected.

In a case similar to the one mentioned here, *tin'anga* will usually throw down their divining bones (*tinhlolo*) to diagnose the problem. Often *tin'anga* will try to cure the problem depending on the severity of the situation, or the sufferer may be diagnosed as having the shadow of the old people (*ku va ni ndzhuti wa vakhale*).

If people are in this state, it is believed that there is no cure for the problem or disease; conventional medicines or the prayers of Christians would not make any difference. More often than not, the person is strongly advised to undergo the *ku cineriwa* process until completing the course before complete healing may take place.

Undergoing the *ku cineriwa* custom is not a voluntary option. One has simply to give in because of exerted torment from the ancestral spirits. Refusal to give in may condemn a person to perpetual struggles in life eventually bringing the harm into the family itself.

Often a party is held in celebration of the completion of the course. During this time the graduate may also demonstrate some of their acquired skills by retrieving some hidden objects through sniffing (*ku vhumba*). Kiernan (1995:23) portrays the situation correctly by saying this:

This is the diviner, commonly a woman, who knows how to operate the levers of the religious system so that it 'works'. She is singled out for this specialisation, 'called' to it by her ancestors, who stake their claim to her by bodily convulsion and mental dissociation are discernible. This close communion with her ancestors empowers her to act as their medium, but her powers have to be channelled and by her subjection to a one-or two-year period of training during which she is removed from the community and apprenticed to an experienced diviner. The techniques imparted permit the development of a number of specialisations within the divining profession. One definite pattern that emerges is the prevalence of the 'sniffing-out' technique in the east and the use of bone or dice throwing in the west.

A special party is given in honour of those who had undergone the *ku cineriwa* ritual and had successfully completed the course. Certain qualities are attributed to them. But the most important quality is that, persons having undergone the *ku cineriwa* ritual, they are no longer their own and are possessed by one or multiple ancestral spirits. They belong to the gods (*I nandza wa swikwembu*) and should always be obedient to the ancestral spirits.

However, the spirits that possess these people are not the same and they may vary conspicuously. One may be possessed by *Nghwana spirits* the other by *Mundau* spirits or *Malaita* spirits, *Mabheka*, *Mashavi* spirits, etc. We will consider this later when we shall be discussing the *mancomane* event in this important theme.

C. *Swikwembu* May Manifest Themselves through People

Ancestral spirits do not only possess people but also manifest themselves through the possessed. In some cases, one finds that the names of these spirits are not real names, but nicknames based on the manner of their appearance. One ancestor's spirit may be described as dumb (*mbeveve*) because when the person is in a trance cannot speak.

Ancestral spirits can disguise themselves in many forms. The people possessed by these spirits and others are sometimes called by the plural name, *la'vanga na moya*, literally meaning those who possess the spirit, or simply by a singular name *la'nga na moya*, the one possessing the spirit.

All words and message pronounced by *la'nga na moya* during a trance induced ceremony, are believed to be not those of the person so possessed but those of ancestors. We shall talk about the trance inducing ceremony in the following section. Suffice to say here that the trance inducing ceremony is characterised by an atmosphere of singing and the beating of drums (*mancomane*⁶⁶), often by the dedicated team responding to the singing of the possessed. In this way the living are able to talk to the ancestral spirits through the person still in trance.

People would often ask questions and the person in the trance will provide answers. When persons come out of the trance, they do not remember what they said. For one to talk to the dead one needs to have spiritists as the media. Through them, the dead can talk to the living and the living can talk back to the dead. During a trance, these people are said to be able to foretell the future and help people circumvent some harmful event likely to take place in the near future. This often takes place during the *mancomane* party which we shall discuss. Therefore, the idea that indigenous people live like there was no tomorrow, is not conclusive. Instead they consult *inyangas* to find out what tomorrow hold for them and their families.

D. *Swikwembu* Enjoy Fellowship with the Living

Swikwembu are believed to enjoy fellowship with the living through an event called *nkhuvo wa mancomane*, or the festivity of drum beating. Certain conditions give rise to the *nkhuvo wa mancomane* festivity being held and the following are well known: Firstly, after being consulted, the traditional healer, or medicine man (*n'anga*) may be of the opinion that the patient's physical condition needs to be brought to the attention of the ancestral spirits for cure. This often happens when the condition of the person does not improve in spite of having consulted scientific doctors and Christian prophets. Such a person, as we have seen, may eventually be considered to have the ancestral

⁶⁶ The meaning of this term *mancomane* is uncertain and confusing. Some people hold that *mancomane* is simply another name referring to ancestral spirits. Others consider it as an event or party where all different people possessed by ancestral spirits or *la'vanga na moya* are invited to gather in one place or household and celebrate together throughout the night. Many regard *mancomane* as a plural name simply referring to the drums or utensils used to produce the sound usually accompanied by singing. Thus *ku ba comane*, means to beat the drum in a certain order; and, therefore, *ku ba mancomane*, means to beat the drums. Different sizes of drums are used in the *mancomane* event or festivity – bigger ones and several smaller ones. However, *mancomane* as referring to ritual drums are sometimes differentiated from secular drums (*xigubhu*). Some Zionist churches would prefer to call their drums *xigubhu* not *mancomane*.

spirits as the cause of the disease (*ku va na vuvabyi bya va khale*). Sometimes if the condition persists in spite of various attempts made, there could be enough symptoms to indicate that the person might have a vocational call to serve the ancestors and should undergo the *ku cineriwa* custom as explained above.

Secondly, *nkhovo wa mancomane* festivity may also be held when the widow's (*noni*) prescribed period has arrived to get rid of her mourning clothes during a cleansing ceremony (*nkhuvo wa ku ambula*). It is important to remember that the mourning custom (*ku va e xirhilweng*) is strictly observed among the Batsonga especially after the death of a spouse.

Certain clothes are prescribed and the widow (*noni*) should wear them for a prescribed period. During this period she is considered as defiled (*ku yila*), and it is taboo for her to do certain things or be engaged in certain public activities. The clothes cannot be taken off at will. According to the ritual of death, she has to wait until the time comes for her to undergo a cleansing ceremony.

Thirdly, sometimes the *nkhuvo wa mancomane* is performed in honour of a graduate as part of thanksgiving to the ancestral spirits for their protection during the course of study, and for blessing the graduate. Often the host will make traditional beer (*byalwa bya swikwembu*), and slaughter a goat (*ku tlhava mbuti*) in celebration of the *mancomane* festivity.

Prior to that, an announcement is made to members of the community informing them of the *nkhuvo wa mancomane* festivity to be held at the homestead. This signals that everyone interested is welcome. People do not have to be invited in a formal way. They may also be welcomed if they happen to be passing by and, on hearing the singing and the beating of drums, decide to join in. But the main guests are the *la'vanga ni moya*. A formal invitation is made to them. *La'vanga na moya* will in turn invites others to the *nkhuvo wa mancomane* festivity. Most of these bring along their own ceremonial objects and their own team members (*swirho swa ntlawa*).

To celebrate *nkhuvo wa mancomane* experts, usually team members of *la'nga na moya* synchronically, beat drums for the one possessed by the spirit. Just before the beginning of the evening throughout the night ancestral songs will be sung, drums will be beaten and people will dance to the excitement of the onlookers.

During the process *la'nga na moya* will fall into a trance. The team members will then drag them into an apartment or in a secluded room. Since the person may be possessed by more than one spirit (*xikwembu*), team members will enquire after the identity of the spirit through questioning to the person in the trance. They would ask, who are you, *Makhosi?* (*Mi va mani?*); what do you want (*Mi xuva yini?*). The spirit will identify itself through the person still in the trance and sometimes order something to be done.

Some spirits may order the person in the trance to be served with pop corn (*ku dya tintshotsho*); or sorghum porridge (*ku dya vuswa bya makhaha*). Other spirits may order him/her to be served even by cannabis (*ku dzaha mbangi*). After the order has been carried with, the team members will help to put the regalia upon the person.

She or he will then sing a song and the team members will respond to the song since they happen to know it. As they do this the person in trance will dance in rhythm with the drumbeat. Some dance strangely and beautifully to the excitement of the crowd as they watch.

During the course of this, the person may also prognosticate events likely to happen to some members of the crowd in the near future. At the end of the presentation the person withdraws and the team members will have him/her wear the ordinary clothes. Then the next ritual will take place. This continues until daybreak when there will be feasting.

The role of team members is very important. They usually know the songs and the style of drum beating familiar to the ancestral spirits possessing a particular person. Some spiritists have no teams, but they are also invited to the event. Such a person may ask the help of other teams to sing a known song or have them learn a new one familiar to the particular spirits. Several teams may be involved in one night with each team accompanying their spiritual leader. Members of the team may be members of one's family. The members of the team often possess fair knowledge of a particular ancestral spirit residing or possessing their leader, its tendencies, manners, likes and dislikes, etc.

Fourthly, the *nkhuvo wa mancomane* may be held every weekend, but usually it is held at the end of the month. *Mancomane* festivities are frequently held at Hammanskraal, north of Pretoria. In this area, one has no trouble finding the spot where the spiritists have gathered as the beating of the drums would lead one on to the event. People are welcome to sit, participate or simply watch on the events.

5.2.2.5 Indigenous People and Concepts of Evil

The majority of evil suffered by the living as far as indigenous people are concerned is attributed mainly to human sources. There are, however, some forms of evil believed to be emanating from the ancestral spirits, but this would rarely if ever be considered. The most feared form of evil is the one supposedly arising from witchcraft or *vuloyi*.

A. The Role of Witches and Sorcerers

Evil is widely believed to originate from a human source. Central to these are the witches and the sorcerers (*vuloyi*). Kiernan (1995:80) correctly describes sorcery and witchcraft as follows:

Sorcery or witchcraft is conceived as human malice (anger, jealousy, envy) activated on the mystical plane, and arising from strained relationships, originally between neighbours and co-residents. To be more precise, sorcery runs in such relationship only to the extent that their competitive character breeds an uncertainty, which is not open to resolution by other means.

Frightful stories circulate in African communities providing various scenarios about what evil deeds suspected to have been committed by sorcerers are like; how they are the main cause of all misery befalling the community. Sorcerers have been known to turn people blind if they happen to anger them, or cripple them or even cause children to fail their examinations at school⁶⁷ as revenge for something the person did, offending them or showing dislike of them. Sorcerers may at times cause the failure of crops or massive death among animals.

Whenever there is a major upcoming event traditional healers are invited to perform a ritual so that witches and sorcerers would not find their way in to cause harm and confusion using their magic. Sorcerers have been known to use their mysterious power

⁶⁷ It is customary in the area of Mokhotlong in Lesotho where I have mission supervisory responsibilities that parents would invite a traditional healer to perform a ritual in one of the lower primary school so that children would not be disturbed by the witches when writing their examinations and that they would pass. However, recently they have started to employ the prayers of Christians instead of inviting traditional healers. This happened when one minister in my charge became a member of School Governing Body. He was allowed to conduct morning devotions at the school. Since then he has become responsible to pray for children before they write their examinations.

to keep meat raw in the pot even if it was cooked half a day. They send children away from their parents or turn people into a criminals, etc. They are generally considered anti-social forces operating mysteriously in the community. In contrasting the role of ancestral spirits and witches Kiernan has this to say:

Yet even when ancestors are at their most punitive, their intervention is admonitory rather than vindictive. It is taken for granted that they are always acting in a socially supportive role. The same cannot be said of another kind of fully human mystical agency, witches and sorcerers, who also are given prominence in the explanation of misfortune. Although those who believe in this source of malevolence do not clearly distinguish between witch and sorcerer, the distinction is not without its usefulness. There are witches who, with or without animal accomplices, unleash their inherent potency without conscious effort, and those who can switch it on and off at will. Sorcerers, on the other hand, generate this power externally for specific purposes, by collecting and mixing substances ('medicines'), which they arm with incantation. Most witches are women, as if their position in society alone disposes them toward witchcraft, whereas everyone has equal access to harmful medicines. It appears too that in the west the accent was on the harm that men could do, while the east there was a much greater fear of the mystical powers of women.

It is also evident from Kiernan (1995) that there are a variety of witches and sorcerers. In addition to those identified above, people talk sometimes about those witches and sorcerers active during the night, *noyi wa ni vusiku*, or those sorcerers and witches active during the day, *noyi wa ni nhlekanhi*. The latter are feared most because of their ability to place poisonous stuff in the food of their enemy. Others are believed to work their mysterious powers through the agency of an animal. Certain animals or birds are perceived to be close associates of witches, e.g. the baboon, *e mfene*, the owl, *e xihunu* and the bat, *e ximhungu*.

Coming across those animals especially at night is regarded as a misfortune as it is believed that a group of sorcerers is nearby. An entrance of one of all of these animals in one's house may be an occasion of house cleansing ritual. It is strange though that ancestral spirits sometimes employ the services of witches and sorcerers to punish their descendants if they do not obey their instructions. Kiernan (1995:23) implies this when he says:

The explanation of misfortune rests on the conjunction of anti-social and pro-social forces, the combination of living evil-doers and

deceased ancestors. In their protective capacity, ancestors shield their descendants from the depredations of nature and from the designs upon them of witches and sorcerers. When ancestors punish transgression, they do not directly inflict harm. Rather, they temporarily relinquish their role as guardians leaving their wards defenceless against attack from witch or sorcerer.

B. The Role of Tin'anga in an Indigenous Community

Initially we must indicate that the term, *n'anga* (singular) or *tin'anga* (plural) simply means a healer or an expert in herbal medicine. Using the term, "witchdoctor" was meant to distinguish scientific medical practitioners from traditional healers. However, the term is considered derogatory. The fact is that traditional healers or *tin'anga* are also subject to witchcraft. Therefore, they would also do all in their powers and skill to defend themselves against social evil of this nature.

Varieties of traditional healers among the Batsonga have been described (Junod 1927:454). These are mostly regarded as the experts of the ATR. They are being consulted for variety of reasons of which we will mention a few. We have selected these five for convenience: (a) they provide security; (b) they interpret dreams and offer alternative solutions; (c) they deal with a variety of diseases; (d) they consult ancestral spirits on behalf of individuals, families and the clan or the entire tribe, and (e) they play an important role in rain making.

1. Traditional Healers *Tin'anga* Provide Security

Indigenous people perceive themselves as generally living in a hostile and unpredictable environment. There are natural disasters in addition to diseases, witchcraft and sorcerers roaming around by day and night seeking someone to harm; there are also magicians who can induce fear by their unusual skills; there are ghosts, which although considered harmless are much feared phenomena, etc. They raise suspicion about almost everything that encroaches onto their habitation in the village.

Some animals may be regarded as symbols or messengers of evil. For instance, unknown wild cats (*ximanga xa nhova*) or other animals like the tortoise (*xibhodya*)

may be suspected to have been sent by an enemy to cast a spell on the homestead. Hardly is anything regarded as being completely harmless.

The most feared thing, amongst others, is *xidyiso*. This occurs when a person would secretly put poison into food and give it to someone to eat. Accusations of this nature happens since indigenous people are generous in giving food to everyone attending a feast, yet complaints and accusations of having been poisoned by a *xidyiso* are made when one becomes ill, especially right after such feasts. *Xidyiso* is suspected to be the cause of the majority of illnesses and deaths in the society.

There is therefore the ritual of *ku tirha muti* or *ku biha muti*, meaning to fix the household, much known among indigenous people. This is when a traditional healer *n'anga* would come usually in the evening, and do incisions on the bodies of the members of the household and smear some substance into the wounds believing it would protect them against natural disasters, especially lightning, accidents at work and on the road and witchcraft, etc.

All members of the household have to undergo the process. Thereafter *n'anga* would go around the house sprinkling water mixed with some substances believed to be capable of barring evil from entering the homestead. Animals, but not birds, may also undergo the same ritual if there are any present. During the process members of the family may be made to wear fetishes on their bodies. *N'anga* is also there to keep people secure in their jobs or help to them get some sort of promotion at work. The scarcity of jobs makes indigenous people to resort to *tin'angas* for help to find a job.

2. Traditional Healers Interpret Dreams

Dreams are not merely mental pictures or visions having no significance. They are the means of communication between a person and the ancestral world. They are messages from the spiritual world to the living foretelling them, or warning them of upcoming events.

Dreams are the rallying point between the dead and the living. Disobedience to messages from ancestors may results in catastrophe. They serve as indicators of

something to be taken seriously. Usually recurring dreams may eventually make one approach *n'anga* for an advice. Nothing is left to chance concerning dreams.

3. Traditional Healers Deal with a Variety of Diseases

Not all diseases are from the environment; some are attributed to ancestral spirits. One disease called "madness of the ancestors" *vuvabyi bya swikwembu* is notorious among indigenous people. According to Thorpe (1992:42), "Junod thinks that it is believed to be possession by Zulu or Shona Spirits and he indicates that those who are possessed eventually became exorcists themselves."

In the meantime they are treated by practising exorcists and the treatment, which lasts for a lengthy period of time, consists of a series of rituals which are carried out before training to become an exorcist can start. Generally, "traditional doctors and diviners are important for the restoration of wellbeing when it is disturbed. The disturbance manifests itself in ill-health or misfortune" (Thorpe 1992:43). Perhaps Kiernan summarises the role of traditional healers better for us when he says:

The diviner is, therefore, a specialist who orchestrates a religious response to crisis and adversity, which is conducive to the restoration of normality. Yet not all of these measures are entirely within the competence of the diviner. The resort to curative and retaliatory medicines is a male specialisation based on an acquired knowledge of herbal and vegetable potencies. Medicines provided by the herbalist are put to a range of uses: to promote harmony, fertility and prosperity in the community; to protect property of all kinds; to settle interpersonal conflict, to simulate sexual attraction; and to restore health and well-being. They can be ingested or otherwise consumed, applied externally or worn simply as charms against the whims of nature. Clearly, the activities of diviner and herbalist are mutually dependent, but there was a tendency in the west to combine them within a single profession, that of the doctor (*ngaka*), who was usually a man, whereas they were practised separately in the east.

4. Traditional Healers Consult Ancestral Spirits

Not only do traditional healers consult ancestral spirits but also involve people in the consultation of ancestral spirits. To consult ancestral spirits *tin'anga* sometimes use divination. They usually order households to provide for a ritual feast *ku phahla swikwembu* in which an animal, usually a goat of particular prescription, would be slaughtered to secure its blood for sprinkling on the *gandzelo* whilst vocally talking to ancestral spirits.

In some clans when an elder is talking to ancestral spirits the audience gather around and kneel next to the person, clapping their hands rhythmically *ku ba mandla* phrase by phrase as the person talks to the ancestors.

The talks take various forms, though. They may be a form of thanksgiving for something beneficial to the family. But they may also be a form of complain and chastisement to a particular ancestor believed not to be behaving well, causing a lot of trouble at home especially if this ancestor demanded a sacrificial goat. It is not unusual to hear one addressing an ancestor in the following manner:

You keep on saying you want a goat. Where do you think we get the money from? You have left us as orphans and jobless but you do not consider all these things yourself. If you do not want us around why do not you leave us alone? Here is some blood for you (*drops of blood are poured on the gandzelo.*), have it. Your children have bought a goat. Enjoy it and share it with others. Here is some beer (*drops of beer are poured on the gandzelo.*); drink it share with others; here is some snuff (*pinches of snuff are sprinkled on gandzelo*), sniff it and share with others. We have given you what you have demanded, now please, keep sleeping (resting) in peace. Whenever you want something please let us know, talk to us in a proper way; also tell ancestor so, and so, not to worry. Her turn will come and we will serve her⁶⁸. At the moment we do not have money.

After the addressing of ancestral spirits, members of the family may rise from the *gandzelo*, and feast.

⁶⁸ This example is an attempt to reconstruct a speech uttered in my presence during a ritual feast near Naboomspruit.

As can be seen in the simulated speech above ancestral spirits are not only thanked for the protection role but also reprimanded for their misbehaviour towards their descendants. The view taken that “*Badimo* are perfectly moral, just, and never partial because of consanguinity (family relationships) (Setiloane 2000:32), and that they are “the guardians of the morality of the community” may be a later development just as we shall see in this study. The fact is that, the living may accuse a particular ancestor of jealousy, *tihanyi*, or telling lies, *hemba mavhunwa*, etc.

E. Traditional Healers and Rain Making

In the following instance, I can only account for an account of the event in which I was personally involved. The scarcity of rain affects the community drastically in some areas and it spells famine. There are “a variety of healers among the Tsonga” (Junod 1927:454). Some are experts in rain making (*n’anga ya mpfula*), others are experts in the prevention of hailstorm (*n’anga ya xihangu*), etc.

To induce rain, concerned members of the community would send a delegation to approach a rain expert and pay the required price for a substance, (*mphuka* in Sepedi), to be mixed with water into a bucket. Early in the morning of the next day a group of children would gather in one place. They would be given instructions not to greet or answer greetings from anyone and to keep quiet on a short journey around the village. A procession would start, led by an old lady, still able to walk. Wherever the lady stops and dips a tuft (*chovo*) into a bucket and sprinkles water on the ground, and the children will shout, “rain!” (*mpfula!*) The group will go around the village sprinkling water and shouting “rain” at intervals and this should be completed before the sun rises.

5.2.2.6 Indigenous People and the Supreme Being

Although beliefs in the Supreme Being have been widely acknowledged among the commentators, yet this concept is not fully developed among indigenous people. Traditional healers do not even speak to God on behalf of the people but rather to ancestral spirits.

Ancestral spirits are known to be actively involved in human affairs. God, the Supreme Being, is generally regarded as too distant, unknown, unpredictable and unapproachable. People do not see God as vitally involved in the day-to-day events of village life and so the ancestral beliefs fill in the gap. Generally, God is considered the ruler of all nature.

In spite of people's pervasive believe in *swikwembu*, however, there is a concept of the Supreme God who is referred to by a singular name, God (*Xikwembu*). He is the creator (*Muvhumbi*) of all human beings. They also give him a vague name, *Tilo*, meaning heaven or sky. However, *tilo* may also mean the lightning. "*Ku biwa hi tilo*," is to be struck by a lightning. He is considered to be all sufficient (*La'nga pfumaliki nchumu*). He is also called the life-giver (*Muhanyisi*) or the elder (*Nkulukumba*).

Most believe that no one could talk to God except through ancestral spirits. This happens very rarely. Heads of families do not talk to God through their ancestors. Beside this *Tilo* is not considered to be living among or with the people. He is considered to inhabit the skies and the heavens (*Wa le henhla-henhla*).

Although *Tilo* is generally considered to be transcendent, he has jurisdiction at national and community levels. *Tilo* is considered to be generally benevolent. For this reason, he is believed to have mercy (*tintswalo*) for he gives rain (*mpfula*), and cause plants to give food (*ku tshovela*) for people. Nevertheless he is considered less interested in daily human affairs on earth. But when people disobey their parents (*vatswari*) by not serving their ancestral spirits (*swikwembu*), then *Tilo* becomes unhappy and withdraws his rain from the earth until people settle the problem.

This means that *Tilo* is more interested in harmony between the living and the dead, while *swikwembu* is charged with promoting harmony among the living (Kiernan 1995). On the other hand, *swikwembu* may also inflict a curse or cast a spell (*mhangu*) on the family level if they are not being cared for. This means that *swikwembu* have jurisdiction on the family level and individual levels.

Certain expressions about God resemble those of the Christian faith. *Xikwembu xi kona*, God exists. This is sometimes said to encourage the patient or members of the family after a short visit, *ku pfluxela movabyi*. *Xikwembu xi ni matimba*, God is all-powerful.

Xikwembu xa swi tiva, God knows all. However, indigenous people do not serve God or considered to be in need any service from human beings except respect. God is served indirectly through ancestral spirits.

5.2.2.7 Preliminary Evaluation

This section has attempted to provide a brief survey of indigenous people of South Africa regarding their cultural life and religious life. We have seen that indigenous people indeed do have a distinctive culture. They have a way of doing certain things in their unique manner.

For the sake of brevity, in dealing with indigenous culture we have avoided issues of education, medicine, initiation rites, environmental concerns, and other factors relating to traditional authority, etc. However, due care should be exercised not to idealise the indigenous world as if everything was perpetually harmonious with few problems to deal with. Natural phenomena and disasters like diseases and drought, poverty, etc. were experienced. Irrational superstitions could not be ruled out in the process. We must admit that evil is endemic to human nature.

Mention was also made of the religious life of indigenous people. Attention was drawn to the fact that although ATR is not a homogenous religion there were common characteristics spanning the entire ATR world wherever it is practiced. Our focus centred much on the interaction between the living and their ancestors. We tried to define the nature of ancestral spirits and attempted to mention some of the groups of their communities. The question of evil in indigenous people is a thorny issue. Evil has been consistent with humanity. Some forms of evil are worse. It would seem that evil is the motive for indigenous people to seek protection from ancestral spirits. We must also realise that, although ancestral spirits are associated with indigenous people, not all were capable of practising ancestor worship, especially the poor.

The poor could not afford a goat, or a cow to slaughter for the ancestors. Although, talk is made of ancestral worship, the term "worship" is not suitable to describe the relationship between the ancestral spirits and the living. As we have seen, ancestral consultation often takes the form of protest by the living against the evil suspected to

have been caused by one of the ancestors. The religion itself was not based on regularity like major religions, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, etc. There are no special days for worship and of performing religious ceremonies. Thus ATR is merely a state of being indigenous person.

From what we have said about the subject itself, it could be strongly inferred that the fact that indigenous people became religious conscious of ATR as a religion distinct from other religions is a later development in spite of the prevalence of ancestral spirits. This happens when indigenous people have to distinguish their own beliefs from the Christian faith. Generally ATR is more interwoven in the lives of indigenous people than could be distinct apart from their lives. There are no articles of faith, creeds, etc. It is just the way indigenous people live and do things. Therefore, religion among indigenous people was not considered a separate entity on its own, to be studied and consciously practised. It was simply part of life and a system of their worldview (Gehman 2000). But owing to emerging indigenous religious trends, attempts are currently being made to systematize it in terms of isolating its unique beliefs and making it distinct (Setiloane 2000). However, ATR continues to defy any form of categorising it neatly into sets of distinct belief system.

In drawing a conclusion from this section, I must indicate that much of the data in this section come from my personal observation and involvement as I have indicated elsewhere. Practically, research on indigenous religions has never been objective, and one doubts if ever it would be. One reason is that so much is read into it especially when studied comparatively. People approach it with some degree of preconceived ideas which could not easily be avoidable. The problem is that, after having been influenced by the Christian faith, we tend to see so much of what we want to see in ATR, especially much Christianity in it. Thus we see in ATR what we had always hoped to find there.

On the other hand, it would generally seem that an evaluation of indigenous culture and religion by the colonialist and the missionary was calculated to have indigenous people hate themselves. This is what is implied in Bosch (1991:294) when he said:

Protestants were hardly more progressive in this regard, not least because of the Calvinist doctrine of the total depravity of human

nature, which Westerners tended to recognize more easily in the peoples of Asia and Africa than in themselves.

Tendencies of this nature on the part of a person outside this religion defy objectivity in approaching this subject. But the outsiders are not the only ones to blame. Gehman (2005:194) correctly points out that “Today many scholars in Africa are re-examining their religious heritage with apologetic defence”

Generally, and in spite of all approaches to the subject, indigenous culture and religion are concerned about the state of being a person living among other persons, therefore, *ubuntu/botho* meaning personhood. This does not mean it is without its faults and shortcomings. African religions and cultures did not exist in their ideal state. Therefore, like any other religion ATR is merely a product of human being without God. It cannot, therefore, be singled out as the worst amongst other forms of world religions. The Bible does not know any religion or idea on earth that has been able to save mankind, but knows the Person, Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Religion may be good or bad, civilised or barbarian but amount to nothing more than being a religion serving to foster the worldview of the people concerned. Jesus Christ relativises human idols in the form of culture, religion, ethnicity, nationality, status, etc., “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Col. 3:28).

In the next section we would like to study indigenous people of South Africa from a political point of view.

5.2.3 Indigenous People of South Africa and Politics

Owing to the vastness of the theme of this section we can do no more than scratch the surface of this subject, bearing in mind that during this time indigenous people were mainly at the receiving end of the political system in this country. We will therefore limit the discussion of this section to three broad topics: 5.2.3.1 Indigenous people in the wake of dying colonialism; 5.2.3.2 Indigenous people in the wake of rising nationalism, and 5.2.3.3 Indigenous people in the wake of modernism and globalisation.

5.2.3.1 Indigenous People in the Wake of Dying Colonialism

The wake of the arrival of colonialism in the 17th century has eclipsed the worldview of the forefathers of the Africans as partly described above. African value systems were largely destroyed and replaced by the values of the Western system. This was largely because of the “identification of christianisation with Europeanization – a common phenomenon throughout the post-Reformation period” (Hastings 1967:17) until recently.

This does not deny the fact that European cultures contributed positively to indigenous cultures. But the whole concept of the then missionary enterprise was based on the assumption that “God, in his providence, had chosen the Western nations, because of their unique qualities, to be the standard-bearers of his cause even to the uttermost ends of the world.” (Bosch 1991:298).

Generally, the encounter between Western nations and indigenous nations resulted in a clash of cultures, Western versus African. Christian missionaries largely sided with Western cultures transmuting it into Christian culture to be defended at all costs. It was a battle between forces of darkness and forces of light. This is where Western culture won the battle but Christianity lost indigenous people. In the following subsections, we will attempt to discuss Western civilisation and its impact not only on the indigenous life but also on Christianity itself.

5.2.3.2 Nature of Western Civilisation

A Renaissance of Individualism

The nature of Western Civilization is uncertain. What is known is that Western culture was not always what it is today. At one stage, it shared similar characteristics like any other cultures in the world. It “underwent enormous development and change” (Senior & Stuhlmüller 1983:10). Nürnberger (1984) describes how centuries back a new dynamic had come into being among the civilisations of humankind. He cannot say when this started and what contributing factors were. He says that some historians

thought that this new dynamic “could be attributed to an amalgamation of ancient Greek and Hebrew perceptions of reality” (1984:32). The former discovered the power of rational thinking and the regularity of laws of nature, and the latter discovered the power of a superior will and the dynamics of history. “When the two combined,” says Nürnberger (1984:32), “a world view was created which has dominated world history ever since”. Among a conglomerate of other civilisations, this new dynamism gained momentum in the context of Western – that is, European – civilisation. Consequently, European civilisation drew all other civilisations of the world such as Chinese civilisation into its vortex. Traces of its impact across the whole globe could be found.

An Emancipation of an Individual

Western civilisation began with a “scientific mentality” which is basically “an impulse of the human mind which longs for the freedom to see for itself, to think for itself, to act according to its own judgement” (Nürnberger 1984:32). Scientists wanted to understand reality and to have it in their control and they systematically discarded other-worldly or superhuman authorities and powers as fabrications of misled human imaginations, scorning the authority of those who were the caretakers of old beliefs and wisdoms.

Consequently, they turned their backs on the past and looked ahead into the future. Circumstances were simply no longer acceptable but questioned. Reality did not matter much except that it was possible, and the possible was to be realised by using human potential, not by waiting for divine powers to act. This alone became a new element to be infused into African culture.

The new conquest of reality was based not on trust but on method. Two philosophical methods took the lead – empiricism, which stresses that only things that can be perceived by the senses or demonstrated by experiment are real; and rationalism, which admits that whatever makes sense in terms of logical thinking is real. Therefore, science as an attempt to understand reality flows naturally into technology, the method used to change reality.

Generally, the essence of Western civilisation, apart from science and technology, is the renaissance of the individual as a person, distinct from community. It paved the way for individual consciousness as a separate entity from community, independent with basic

rights. It is an emancipation of an individual from community values to create individual value system.

5.2.3.3 Western Civilisation and its Impact on the World

It is not possible to describe the scope of the impact of Western civilisation upon indigenous people of South Africa in a study of this nature. As we have seen, the wake of the advent of Western civilisation resulted in drawing all other civilisations of the world into its vortex. It had such a powerful influence that other people, including Africans, turned their backs on their past and looked ahead into the future. It was a pervasive mental revolution; circumstances were simply no longer acceptable but questioned. In the following paragraphs, we shall discuss the impact of Western civilisation upon indigenous people by concentrating upon a few critical events, which we consider the basis of fundamental change. These are urbanisation, education, health services, and ownership of land.

5.2.3.4 Indigenous People and Urbanisation

We have seen already that Western Civilisation created a dynamic impact across the world and not least in South Africa. Kritzing (1995) correctly reminds us that traditional settlements of the Third World were built not around industry but people, for instance, kings, chiefs, clans and families, etc.

In the course of the time, they developed strong group bonds and nourished their identity, shared the work and averted the danger by concerted action. They laboured together, producing food for themselves, or bartered their excess production in return for the goods that other people fashioned. In that way, villages were self-supporting.

Dispossession of land by the colonists, to be discussed later on, had fundamentally changed all these, but it is urbanisation that still sustains the pain of dispossession of land. Kritzing (1995:202) summarises development toward urbanisation by saying:

Sometime around the eighteenth century, however, everything changed. A number of factors changed methods of production radically: the forging of steel, the making of stronger metal tools, the harnessing of steam to power machines, and later the introduction of electricity and the internal combustion engine. Factories came into being, where products were mass-produced. Mines could increase their production manifold. People had to leave their homes for work, whether at mines or factories. In time it became too difficult to commute to and fro, so families decided to move closer to the centralised industrial locations. Some towns developed into large cities. The larger number attracted even more people who served different functions...and the modern city was born, the result of a new way of living.

African urbanisation is the result of people's conscious decisions to move closer to the cities, "not ...to get rich. Their hope is mere survival. Many don't make it, and sink into still deeper poverty. Others fall prey to the violence endemic to these cities, which is making government and development almost impossible" (Kritzinger 1995:204). The flux to the cities corroded traditional meaning of life and social identity – a new nation of wage earners was born.

However, according to Nürnberger (1984:33), it is technology, which had enormous effects on humanity and on the rest of reality. He elaborates thus:

Technology led to production by machines, and thus to *industrialisation*. Industrialisation drew people from the land into cities. We call that *urbanisation*. Societies ceased to be based on small-scale communities, intimate relationships and simple institutions, such as the family, clan or tribe. Large conglomerations of people called for large-scale organisation of transport and traffic, communications networks, supply lines and distribution channels for raw materials and consumer products. Large administrative machinery developed. We call that a *bureaucracy*" In all these instances the technological method was applied to make the organisation of society ever more efficient.

Because of urbanisation Technology further led to division of labour. Whereas before almost everybody was a farmer or a hunter, including political rulers and religious leaders new occupations had emerged which further led to a high degree of specialisation. Elaborating on the concept of specialisation David Cook (1983:8-9) has this to say:

The scientific experts are specialists in particular fields. By the very nature of things, it is no longer possible to know everything, as is reputed of Aristotle. Rather, it seems that modern experts know more about less and less. Specialization in science is increasingly narrow. It is no surprise that those who work in a narrow area of knowledge might well imagine that their area is the most important one.

This then is one aspect of the impact of Western civilisation. When it was applied to indigenous people in South Africa it drastically shattered their worldview, which was sustained until then by the concept of ancestral spirits. Technology had not only had enormous effect on the physical world but also on human beings as well. It affected their bodies and their minds. "Through education, propaganda and advertising the collective consciousness of people is manipulated. In the biological sciences organs are transplanted and genes are engineered" (Nürnberg 1984:34). We shall have more to say about education later on.

Granting that indigenous worldview system disintegrated with the arrival of European nations in Africa and in South Africa (Saayman 1997), let us consider briefly the manner in which Western civilisation has had an impact on the indigenous people in general.

Of late indigenous people have begun to adopt many Western ways of life and cultures with varying degrees. Whereas people traditionally wore skin clothing and lived in small beehive-shaped grass huts, now thousands upon thousands have adopted Western dress, and build houses with straight walls and windows. No longer do they need to kneel down to get into the hut.

Clay pots which the whole family would sit around, dipping their fingers in turn into one pot while eating have given way to modern plates usually with forks and knives suited to individualised meals. Grass mats have given way to beds. Shoes are now a common phenomenon. The whole indigenous worldview was thus radically shaken.

Although indigenous people adopted Western ways of life and culture⁶⁹, socially they were entirely different from their European counterparts. Economically, the great bulk

⁶⁹ As a matter of the fact, "Even though extensive missionary activity was undertaken and the gospel spread around the globe, these new areas of the church were, for the most

of indigenous people was and still is on what is termed a sub-economic level. They are the society that has to pay just as much as for a loaf of bread, a sack of meal, or a yard of cloth as the white man, and sometimes even more, but can command wages that are only a fraction of what the white man enjoys. This economic problem is a very thorny one, and there is much to be said on both sides of the equation but this falls outside the scope of this study.

Radical change did take place in all spheres of the indigenous world. However, Saayman (1997:88) argues that these radical changes took place mainly in the context of the public sphere and that Christian mission played an important role in these changes and developments. He studied three critical dimensions of public life which he considered "extremely important at present and will feature highly on the government's for the priorities of the Reconstruction and Development Programme". The dimensions he had selected for study are education, health services and the ownership of land. We shall now briefly review his arguments on these dimensions and some other relevant ones listing them under different sub-themes.

5.2.3.5 Indigenous People and Education

Generally missionary work has been established with three main emphases: evangelism, education and medicine. Various groups of missionaries from different parts of the West worked together in providing evangelism, education and medicine to indigenous people of South Africa, however, their priorities in terms of implementing these services in mission fields were different. Differences in emphasis of one of these aspects over or at the expense of others became a matter of concern among some missionaries. Esselstyn (1952:35), himself a missionary, complained,

Although there are in the country many devoted, sincere men and women (another group of missionaries) who are earnestly working for what they believe to be the best of the native people and the country as a whole, yet they strongly reflect in their work the attitudes and atmosphere of their home churches. They often emphasize the social

part, thoroughly Westernized and their indigenous cultures made little impact on the self-consciousness of the church as a whole" (Senior & Stuhlmueller 1983:10)

gospel, education, medical missions, and formal worship at the expense or even to the exclusion of a heart experience of God.

The emphasis of one aspect more than others also came to the attention of Saayman (1997). He discusses how mission involvement provided education in South Africa characterised by “strong roots in the Pietistic missionary tradition”. He contends that “Pietistic missionaries were always strong proponents of providing schools in the mission fields”, and would not lose sight of the fact that “church and school should go together” (1997:88).

Saayman (1997:89) distinguish between two groups of missionaries regarding their approach to evangelise the indigenous people. He terms one group *liberal humanists* (:89 emphasis not mine). Liberal humanists sought to civilise indigenous people before Christianising them. Their approach was thus “Civilisation through education will lead to Christianisation” (:89). On the other hand Pietistic missionaries’ concerns were evangelically motivated and therefore their approach to mission fields was “No Christianisation without education” (:89). In comparing the two approaches Saayman (1997:89) points out that “Pietists’ concern for education was therefore *evangelically motivated*, while liberal humanists’ concern for education was more *socio-politically motivated*” (emphases not mine).

Saayman (1997) identifies still another group of missionaries who were also involved in providing education but laid “a strong emphasis on *indigenous culture*” Unlike the previous two groups, “Their main motivation was not to ‘win souls for the Lamb’ (like the Pietists) or to ‘create black Englishmen with civilised standards’ (like liberal humanists). They were more concerned to maintain indigenous people’s culture. Catholic missionaries, on their part laid, great emphasis on providing education and that where it would be impossible for carrying out both the immediate task of evangelisation and educational work, the former would be neglected to perfect the latter because, “Who owns the schools will own Africa” (Saayman in Saayman 1997:91).

5.2.3.6 Indigenous People and Health Services

Medicine is one of the three emphases of missionary work, the others being evangelism and education. When missionaries arrived in mission fields, they were “struck by ‘widespread poverty and diseases with heavy mortality at all ages, but particularly in children’” (Allwood in Saayman 1997:92).

Medical and educational needs were as appalling as the spiritual darkness of the people⁷⁰. This suggests that, in some ways, indigenous people were already in a more vulnerable situation by the time both the colonialists and the missionaries had arrived. But the rate of vulnerability was at the same time increased by systematic dispossession of land and stock by the colonialists.

On the other hand, the provision of medical care was not foreign to the Christian faith community. On the contrary, it was always an integral part of it. But whereas education was utilised as an evangelistic tool quite early on, the provision of medical care had always been much more firmly rooted in the compassionate and charitable ministries of the church (Saayman (1997:93).

Healing had from the beginning been part and parcel of the great Commission. Missionaries were not simply digging people “out of heathenism” (Esselstyn 1952), but were also compassionate to them. At the same time they were setting the trends which future African governments would emulate. Thus it is correct to say the “system [medical missions] did an enormous amount of good and very often laid the groundwork for the medical services of the new emergent nations [in Africa]” (Saayman & Kriel in Saayman 1997:93).

Being compassionate as it was, the provision of medical care by the missionaries using biomedicine was also designed either subtly or directly to displace and replace the traditional role of medicine men and women, commonly known as *tin'anga ta ntumbuloko* in Setsonga who, until then, as we have seen, had dominated the practice.

⁷⁰ Few mission boards would be happy with this kind of report without asking what had been the cause. But this is typically a report written during the heyday of colonialism. How otherwise one would find healthy and happy individuals and people enlightened in spiritual life while their belongings had been confiscated and their extended families scattered?

They had successfully saturated their communities with the concept that links diseases with spiritism or magic. Disease does not just mean pain in the body but also the loss of security or ancestral approval. Witchcraft is supposed to be the main cause of disease since sorcerers are supposed to be able to use their magic to cast spell on people.

Healing, then, was more than giving doses of traditional medicines; the patient latently forms expectations that the cause should be adequately traced and dealt with as well. Once the cause had been so dealt with, security was supposed to have been restored to the patient.

On the other hand, the system of restoring security or ancestral approval took many and sometimes ugly forms which we will not consider in any detail. It may involve the tradition of smelling out witches, exorcising the spirit or disease often by sending it back (*ku ttherisela*) to the enemy supposed to have brought it. Disease, as we have seen, may also mean being called by the ancestors to the practice of being a diviner.

Now both the community and *tin'anga* had to face the challenges of biomedicine brought by the missionaries – their role was drastically reduced. The following statement by Saayman (1997:94-5) should be understood in this very context:

The provision of medical care brought Christian missionaries into direct (yet hidden) conflict with African Traditional Religion, because in traditional African culture the problem of sickness and wellbeing is firmly rooted in the religious domain. In this context there suddenly appeared a group of strange people (missionaries), proclaiming a new religion while at the same time introducing a new, thoroughly materialistic system of healing (for even where the medical worker is a sincere Christian, the Western biomedical system is a thoroughly materialistic system).

Being “materialistic” as it is, biomedicine had in all respects represented a paradigm shift to indigenous people’s concept of disease and healing. Whereas healing was brought by the agency of ancestral spirits, the new technology had nothing in common with any of those. Many *tin'angas* who accepted the Christian faith were expected to give up their practice and to surrender their divining bones and other related materials to missionaries who would destroy them in burning services. It would then take some time for the indigenous world to adjust adequately to biomedicine practice, which often does nothing to provide a sense of security during or after healing.

On the other hand, it was also imperative for missionaries to provide medical care not only to do good to the bodies of the people, but also “to relieve human suffering...because disease was bound up in the superstition and witchcraft of the people, and sickness in a kraal often meant persecution or death to the one ‘smelled out’ and supposed to have caused the sickness” (Esselstyn 1952:78).

The “relief of human suffering” also meant missionaries frowning upon the “practice such as killing twins and trial by ordeal” which “were reflections of superstitious ideas rooted in an early stage of African development, when something like the birth of twins could not be scientifically explained, and, therefore, gave rise to religious fear” (Rodney 1982:253; also Junod 1927).

To many people the provision of biomedicine should have been something from missionaries appreciated by all Africans. But as we have seen, this was not always the case. The central issue is that “in all lands medical missions have gone hand in hand with evangelism, and have contributed largely to the success of the gospel⁷¹... People have been saved, whole kraals transformed, and churches founded as a direct result of the work of our hospital and dispensaries” (Esselstyn 1952:78).

The provision of medical care was in itself a facet of Cultural Revolution and “this process had serious effects in public life... it led to a loss of identity among African patients, not so much a loss of personal identity, but rather a loss of tribal (communal) identity (Jansen & Bosch in Saayman 1997:94).

The transformation of “whole kraals” meant also receiving back into the community those “many outcasts in society and persons who suffered from religious and social prejudices” (Rodney 1982:253). This meant that what was supported by sections of indigenous people was opposed by the missionaries. The transformation of whole kraals would then have meant a partial success on the part of the missionaries as “many Africans accepted the religious aspects while rejecting the cultural appendages”

⁷¹ It is not always clear what one understands by the “success of the Gospel”. If that meant building churches and gathering congregations that would be valid, but if it meant the transformation of the people with the Gospel of Christ, that is disputable. This does not mean, however, that people were not transformed by the Gospel, but not to the extent to which one could talk about the “success of the Gospel”.

(Rodney 1982:253). Therefore Mc Great (in Saayman 1997:95) is right to have realized that

Despite their sincere efforts, therefore, medical missionaries created something entirely different from what they had in mind: So instead of creating a bright new society by sweeping away "old and superstitious practices," the missionaries contributed to a rapid increase in the suspicions of witchcraft and fear of its effects because they denied its reality.

Accepting the religious aspect "while rejecting the cultural appendages and European missionaries themselves" gave rise to "the trend in colonial Africa known as the Independent church movement. It was a trend in which thousands of African Christians participated by breaking away from European churches (especially Protestant churches), and setting up their own places of worship under Christian African leadership" (Rodney 1982:254). "Independent church movement" or AICs had in many ways become a receptacle of indigenous culture though slightly modified and refined.

Generally, the provision of medical care suffered from a number of serious contractions three of which have been listed by Saayman & Kriel (in Saayman 1997:95) for us to ponder

1. Medical missionaries claimed to heal in the name of God, yet in their practice failed to integrate their belief in God with their medical practice in a way which was compatible with African culture
2. Medical missionaries claimed special expertise in the area of diagnosis of illness, yet failed to ground their diagnosis in an understanding of the sick person within her/his cultural presuppositions about the causes of disease...
3. The clash of the secularised, technocratic Western medical system with the thoroughly religious traditional African views on healing created an intolerable contraction for the medical missionary. He or she now faced "the temptation either to reduce scientific medicine to gimmicks for the saving of souls, or to reduce his(her) persona religious faith to simple humanitarianism.

The failure of missionaries to address the problems as raised above is one of the occasion that indigenous *tin'anga* have re-emerged on the present scene. Currently, traditional healers are organised and some are registered and could practise in some government medical institutions.

5.2.3.7 Indigenous People and Ownership of Land

Land has always been a source of livelihood in Africa. Here indigenous people produced crops for food to sustain community life and to keep their stock farming in it. Certain land areas would not be disturbed as they were regarded as sacred and inhabited by ancestral spirits, and certain trees were also associated with the abode of ancestral spirits.

The most destructive phenomenon brought by the European colonialists has been the introduction of capitalist individualistic system in Africa in general and in South Africa in particular (cf. Rodney 1982). Indigenous people were not trained for it and not at all ready for it and still not. They thus easily fell prey to those who took advantage of it for their own gain.

In South Africa the introduction of capitalism was accompanied by the destruction of tribal authorities and dispossession of land (Muller 1980; Readers Digest 1988; Saayman 1997), as well as the reduction of indigenous people to extreme poverty that destroyed their moral life. Perhaps no better summary of drastic dispossession has been given other than the one offered by Muller (1980:91) when he said:

Teen die laaste agtien jaar van die Kompanjiesbewind was die stamstelsel van die Kaapse Hottentotte reeds so goed as vernietig. Baie Hottentotte was verarm en sonder vee. Die groot getalle wat nie meer 'n kaptein aangehang het nie, het óf rondswerwende jagters geword, óf, soos die Boesmans, 'n rowerslewe begin lei, óf na boereplase gegaan as laagbesoldigde bediendes, óf hulle teen die negentigerjare op 'n sending stasie gaan vestig. 'n Nuwe gemeenskap met nuwe probleme en nuwe uitdagings was besig om te ontwikkel

This “*nuwe gemeenskap*” or “new community” with its “*nuwe probleme*” or “new problems” and “*nuwe uitdaging*” or “new challenges” was the result of being changed from self-sufficiency to dependence. That indigenous people were “*verarm*” or “impoverished” and began leading “*rowerslewe begin lei*” or “robbers’ life” was not the result of being uncivilised or because of their traditional methods; but as a consequence of being detribalised (*nie meer 'n kaptein aangehang het nie*),

dispossessed and reduced to begging. This translated into people becoming disorganised and rootless rendering them more vulnerable to various schemes of the early settlers.

However, this did not take place without considerable resistance from the indigenous people. "As early as 1655 the Peninsular Khokhoi had objected to white expansionism, and were to do so again and again over the next half century; and on at least two occasions, in 1659 and 1673, their resistance flared into open warfare" (Reader's Digest 1988:55). However, the worst was yet to come. Starrenburg (in Readers' Digest 1988:55) maintains that:

For many colonists the quickest way to acquire cattle was to take them from the countless herds belonging to the Khokhoi. Gradually they were to lose their livestock, their grazing-land, and their water rights – in fact everything that had made Khokhoi society unique. By 1740, less than half a century and many skirmishes later, the only Khokhoi left in the Western Cape were working as labourers for the colonists, many of them in conditions of dreadful servitude

Indeed, "modern capitalism, building on the philosophy of Adam Smith, has created a world totally different from anything known before," especially for the indigenous people of South Africa (Theron 1992:180). The system has both its negative and positive sides especially from an historical point of view. It has in itself some seeds of both liberation and enslavement mechanism. Perhaps Rodney (1982:254) hits the nail on the head when he says:

The European bourgeoisie were progressive when they defended the individual from the excessive control of the father in the family and against the collective regulations of the church and feudal society. However, the capitalist system then went on to champion and protect the rights of the individual property owners against the rights of the mass of exploited workers and peasants. When capitalism had its impact on Africa in the colonial period, the idea of individualism was already in its reactionary phase. It was no longer serving to liberate the majority but rather to enslave the majority for the benefit of a few.

It is generally known that, traditionally, indigenous people did not practise the system of individual land tenure (Saayman 1997 also Maithufi 2004). The land was there for the use of residential grazing and cultivation purposes. Basically the land belonged to the ancestors and was vested in the chief. This situation has been described as follows:

All land occupied by a tribe is vested in the chief and administered by him as head of the tribe. This he does through his sub-chiefs and headmen, who regulate the distribution and use of land in their respective areas. The land is not his personal possession with which he can deal as he pleases. None of the land belongs to the chief, nor can he dispose of it except gratuitously and to members of his own tribe (Pauw in Maithufi 2004:56 cf. Saayman 1997:95).

Just as we have indicated elsewhere, it can be assumed that for centuries before the arrival of the European nations in South Africa, this used to be the position. As head of the community, the traditional leader, in consultation with his councils, allots portions of land to families, and although persons allotted the land occupy it exclusive to the rights of others, they cannot be described in a modern sense as owners. But when individualism was applied to land, it meant that the notions of private ownership and the transfer of land through sale became prevalent (cf. Rodney 1982; Maithufi 2004).

But as Rodney (1982:255) points out, individual capitalism may have been successful in metropolitan European societies in that “the rise of the bourgeois class indirectly benefited the working classes, through promoting technology and raising the standard of living.

However, in Africa, colonialism did not bring those benefits – “it merely intensified the rate of exploitation of African labour and continued to export the surplus” (:255), and along with this, “it destroyed the social solidarity and promoted the worst form of alienated individualism without social responsibility” (:255). Therefore, generally, individual “capitalism in the form of colonialism failed to perform in Africa the tasks which it had performed in Europe in changing social relations and liberating the forces of production” (:216).

“What is not so well known, and even less often conceded,” says Saayman (1997:95), “is the fact that Christian mission in South Africa contributed to the existence of the problem itself and may have an important role to play in dealing with it”. In this way the Christian Church also became a capitalist institution being fully aware that “where colonialists failed to secure ‘land right’ by treaty, they often resorted to conquest to secure ownership of land” (Hasselhorn in Saayman 1997:96). “Large tracts of land were alienated and ‘given’ to missionary societies and churches, often after they had made an

appeal for such grants to the African king or to the colonial authorities” (Hasselhorn in Saayman 1997:96).

On the other hand, missionaries sometimes supported conquests of the lands by colonialists. In one sense, it served to undo the tightly knit society that characterised the solidarity of the people. Being thus weakened, indigenous people would generally relax their resistance to acceptance of the “gospel” and Europeanization. This seems to be “the main reason for the missionaries’ support of Shepstone...to have been their failure to make any significant inroads by way of conversions into the tightly knit Zulu society” (Pakenham 1991 in Saayman 1997:96). The same motivation was also reflected in the *Missionsberichte* of the Berlin Mission Society for 1861 which Saayman (1991 in Saayman 1997:97) quoted as follows:

It was certain that in a country where God’s judgement has broken the people politically the seed of evangelism is most conveniently sowed, that is where the missionaries enjoy the legal protection of the colonial government.

This created the “dilemma that still confronts black South Africans in their relationship with the Bible” (Mofokeng 1988:34). Today there is “wide credence for the well-known African account of missionary colonialism: ‘When the missionaries came, we (Africans) had the land and they had the Bible. The missionaries said: ‘Let us close our eyes and pray.’ When we opened our eyes after the prayer, they had the land and we had the Bible.’” But the current state of affairs indicates that they did not stop there – they also gave us the education and took back the Bible. The transaction could be illustrated diagrammatically as follows:

The Bible-Land-Education Transaction

Phase I		Phase II		Phase III	
Colonialists	Africans	Colonialists	Africans	Colonialists	Africans
Bible	Land	Land	Bible	Bible	Education
Education	No Education	Education	No Education	Education	No Bible
No Land	No Bible	No Bible	No Land	Land	No Land

DIAGRAM 5

Phase I. The colonialists arrived armed with the Bible and Education, but had no land. Africans had the land but were without Education and the Bible. A prayer meeting was conducted as suggested in Mofokeng (1988) above and eyes were closed.

Phase II. After the prayer session, eyes were opened and colonialists had the land and the education without the Bible; whereas the Africans had the Bible but no land and no education. Mission schools started and many indigenous people enrolled for education.

Phase III. After education a graduation ceremony was held and colonialists had both the Bible, Education and the Land; and Africans had education without the Bible and the Land. This is the approach used by Liberal humanists who sought to civilise indigenous people before Christianising them, believing that civilising through education would lead to Christianisation. But, as we shall see, that did not translate into Christianisation, and provision of education by missionaries became an end in itself.

5.2.3.8 Preliminary Evaluation

In concluding this section, we need to draw attention to a few observations. We have touched briefly on the impact of Western civilisation upon indigenous people of South Africa. In itself, Western civilisation is of a superior nature, not that other world civilisations were irrelevant or useless. Other world civilisations served their people in the context in which they found themselves. The Western civilisation is essentially more progressive. Early on it adapted itself to science and technology and, therefore, stresses objectivity.

However, it fell into the wrong hands. Unfortunately, people who were meant to benefit other people with the blessing of Western civilisation simply took advantage of weak situations wherever they found them abroad and became too ethnocentric. They plundered weaker nations by employing the use of science and technology destroying their cultural systems. Consequently, Western civilisation, which was meant to benefit humanity in the world, had become itself a problem. The Western civilisation became nationalised in the exclusive sense and assumed a superior place relating to others.

This makes us repeat what we have been saying throughout this study, and we are saying it again. The problem is not Western civilisation. It is good and progressive. But the problem is the people upon whom the Western civilisation depends. They have owned it instead of sharing it. It became their exclusive property and not the means to enrich the world but rather to exploit⁷² it.

In so doing, they became insensitive to other cultures. This did not help indigenous people on the ground. Part of the re-evangelisation of South Africa will include undoing what the missionaries did, especially in the areas of justice, race relations and cultural sensitivity. Generally, it would seem ironic to say that Westerners themselves are still foreigners to Western civilisation. Practically, they are themselves far behind it.

In the light of what has emerged during this discussion, I will strongly argue that the cure to Western civilisation is not non-Western civilisation, but Western civilisation in Christ. Western civilisation outside of Christ turns its agents into brutes and those who outside it into victims.

5.2.4 Indigenous People in the Wake of Rising Nationalism

We are not intending to trace the rise of African nationalism from the cradle of modern politics. We are aware that the tribal authority system was not only partly destroyed by colonialist administration but also by people themselves who turned their backs on from the system to pursue opportunities in capitalism. This weakened full-scale resistance against colonialism.

But it was the fruit of education and civilisation that helped create new African nationalists. The new crop of future African leaders was educated mainly in mission schools. After acquiring education and civilisation they hoped they would be assimilated as equals into white society. However, that did not happen as the Church

⁷² The statement of the WCC Consultation on Racism (WCC 1969:14) reads, "The developed Western and so-called Christian countries of the world have obtained their wealth from centuries of exploitation of the newly independent and developing countries".

mirrored racism in other areas of white society⁷³. This created general resentment, which sparked the backlash to this typical paternalistic white control of the church.

It is largely within the contexts such as these that the awakening of African nationalism took place in the form of resistance against colonialism. Conditions intensified after World II when nations became conscious of their rights to self-determination. In the succeeding paragraphs we shall initially consider the rise of nationalism on the religious level and proceed to consider the rise of African nationalism on the political level.

5.2.4.1 Rise of Nationalism in the Religious Level

The early rise of African nationalism took place in religion. We have referred to the instances in which indigenous nationalists broke away from mission churches to form AIC, and how AIC became the receptacle of indigenous culture in the wake of its destruction. For this reason we shall first consider religious reaction to colonial powers. Without extended discussion, it is profitable to select two organisations that were formed as a result of breakaways from mission churches controlled by White missionaries, on political grounds. Later on we shall discuss AIC as an element of emerging indigenous religious trends.

A. Nehemia Tile and the Thembu Church

The initial case is that of Nehemia Tile who broke away from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1884 to form the Thembu Church (Bosch *et al* 1980). It is perceived that,

Tile's break with the Wesleyan Church was a result of his political activities as a Thembu nationalist, and more specifically as leading counsellor to the Thembu king. The church was not alone in frowning on his politics – the Cape Department of Native Affairs appeared to have put pressure on the church to take action against him (Bosch *et al* 1980:246).

⁷³ This is in spite of the fact that the Church preached equality but failed to live up the standard it purports to have been the representative of.

In many ways, the Thembu Church was the first of a series of independent Black churches that emerged over the years, and therefore, Tile's secession was highly significant. It is believed that at least two things influenced him greatly:

One was Tile's strong sympathy with the national aspirations of the Thembu; the other was his resentment of the extent to which White missionaries dominated the mission church. Tile, whom the missionaries regarded as an able preacher and industrious worker, therefore, started propagating a separate church free from White domination.

Tile's Thembu Church was unique in that it was not an apolitical Church and thus differed measurably from most of later independent Black churches. As Bosch *et al* (1980:247) point out,

It is generally accepted that independent churches are fairly apolitical, whereas under Tile's leadership the Thembu Church consciously pursued a manifestly political agenda. In this respect, therefore, Tile's church was representative of the "Ethiopian" independent churches – a term used to indicate Black churches that broke away from their parent churches for explicitly political or nationalistic reasons. This was to give rise to a further significant phenomenon, which was that the Thembu Church transcended its initial strictly ethnic basis and began to attract members from a broader spectrum of Black people

Although this was a Thembu Church, yet Tile himself made it clear that he was less concerned about ethnic distinctions that abound in Blackness generally.

Thus Tile told Veldman Bikitsha, so the headman reported later, that the church had as its object 'a political move to free the Native from European control, and for the ultimate supremacy of the Coloured races throughout South Africa (Saunders 1970:567).

B. Mangena Mokone and the Ethiopian Church

Mangena Mokone led the next breakaway in 1892 by leaving the Wesleyan Church after opposing segregation in the Wesleyan Congress in Pretoria (Readers 1988). He formed the Ethiopian Church in response to the biblical injunction "that Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God"

Consequently,

The formation of other independent churches led to concern in missionary circles and fear among the white public that these developments were a prelude to their being driven into the sea. In the northern colonies especially, American missionaries were criticised for instilling false hopes in the masses (Documents on Mission 988:285).

Thus, the cradle of modern African nationalism began in the religious sphere, but did not end there. A series of other breakaways from mission controlled churches signalled that indigenous people were not longer prepared to stay forever under the yoke of missionaries. Observing the breakaway phenomena Bedwell (1953:100) said,

We have the numerous sects, which have arisen through the throwing off the yoke of the white missionaries. We feel that the root cause of this has been the failure of the missionary to give the native Christian as much responsibility as he can carry. These sects are not wholly bad, but most of them are a very poor example of Christianity and in many cases beer-drinking and divine worship are vitally connected. These conditions arise largely though a failure to preach the gospel to the masses in the power of the Spirit

It is clear that the two organisations briefly discussed above, broke away from mission churches not because of religious disenchantment but on political grounds. However, they seem to have raised concern on the behaviour of the Church at the time in response to colonial powers.

The position of the Church during the time under consideration was quite ambivalent. The Church preached equality (Readers Digest 1988) but tolerated and sometimes practised the policies of segregation. Generally, the behaviour of the Church did not help to advance the Gospel of Christ in spite of the fact that the Church did exceptionally well in giving education to indigenous people. People were educated but were not brought into a saving relationship with Christ. The following interview between Bedwell (1953:99) and an African woman illustrates the case stated above:

I (Bedwell) inquired of a native woman: "Have you ever heard of Jesus Christ?" There was silence for a minute, so we repeated the question. "Who is He?" was the bewildered reply (from an African woman). "I (an African woman) do not know Him." We pressed our

inquiries further: "Have you ever heard of a school where people learn to read?" "Yes," was the reply, "I have heard of that."

Bedwell (1953) argues that incidents such as these throw much light on the situation then existing in South Africa. Many indigenous people were acquainted with mission schools, but were ignorant of the living Christ. For him it was saddening to converse with educated natives in the compounds and discovering that, though they knew how to read and write in English, they would declare that they did not know the way of salvation, and expressed surprise at the thought that one can be saved and know it. It was tragic for him to learn that they acquired their English from a missionary who was sent to preach Christ.

But what Bedwell (1953) did not quite realise is that the provision of education to indigenous people was simple one of the strategies calculated to lead people to Christ. For instance, we have just referred to Liberal humanists who sought to civilise indigenous people before Christianising them. Their approach was thus "Civilisation through education will lead to Christianisation". But civilisation through education has never translated into developing a salvific or redemptive relationship with God. It has rather become an end in itself.

5.2.4.2 The Rise of Nationalism on the Political Level

According Senior & Stuhlmüller (1983:1), "The political and historical explosions of the post-World War II period brought momentous consequences for the world and the church. The colonial period came to an abrupt halt and a new awareness of cultural and national identity swept through the globe like a brush fire" This gave rise to African nationalism which manifested itself by developing conflicts with both the colonial powers and the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Resistance against colonial powers was mainly tribally based, whereas resistance against Apartheid was a national Black resistance. We shall look at each theme briefly.

A. Tribal Resistance against Colonial Powers

Indigenous people did resist colonialism but could simply not match the power of the gun with the assegai. Moreover, their resistance was largely tribally based and often took the form of unsynchronized resistances, the majority of which colonialists found no surmounting problems in crushing and infiltrating the tribal system before seizing the land.

Perhaps Marcus Garvey is one of the early people who realized there was a lack of solidarity among indigenous people. He formulated the concept of the unity of blacks, which would see "the return of land to its ancestral owners," (Readers Digest 1988:323). This "return of land to its ancestral owners" meant taking back the land from colonialists. His teaching appealed to many people, especially in the Transkei. It appealed also to the broad mass of Reserve-based Africans who were still deeply rural, clinging tenaciously to a way of life now under serious threat. These were general conditions of life:

Poverty grows into hunger, debt with no hope of escape. No people under the sun who have not been tamed and weakened by centuries of low diet and despotism can fail, in such conditions, to get into state of unrest (Readers Digest 1988:323).

B. National Black Resistance against Apartheid

On the public level the fires of Apartheid fanned the rise of African nationalism. Apartheid was yet another form of Afrikaner nationalism. The Apartheid philosophy was in itself an attempt to deal with racial pluralism. The policies of Apartheid sought to promote the concept of self-determination on the ethnic or race level. For Apartheid, South Africa consisted of many nations divided into races.

Therefore, the country was to be dissected into many racially independent states with each race preserving its own identity and its own culture. However, this was not done equitably since there were policies promoting unequal distribution of land. By the time Apartheid had to be implemented fires of African nationalism were burning high; already Africans have become conscious as a nation themselves. The struggle for

freedom and justice ensued against Apartheid to create more pressure in order to negotiate a democratic South Africa.

Esselstyn (1952:22) observed that indigenous people were being divided into many tribes, speaking many languages having many customs and yet having underlying similarities that marked them as people descended from the Negro of Central Africa. It is the discovery of these "underlying similarities" that helped Africans realise they as Black races had much in common.

The Black struggle against Apartheid was, therefore, a unified one. Black political parties were organised on a national level and worked together to oppose the implementation of the Apartheid policy. Finally, the democratic government was instituted. The process of healing between races through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission took place.

5.2.4.3 Preliminary Evaluation

For some it would indeed seem that the buck should stop right here now that the struggle against Apartheid has officially ended and a democratically elected government in South Africa has been instituted. But democracy is not a magic. It cannot heal the wounds of the nation nor transform it.

However, democracy in good hands may be considered as a tool to fashion the nation under the Kingdom of God; in the wrong hands it may be a passage leading to perpetual confusion and conflict. Democracy may also, and without changing its name, clandestinely serve the purposes for which Apartheid had been devised. It all depends on whose hands democracy is.

The fact of the matter is that liberation has been achieved in South Africa, but transformation has yet to begin. In most cases, transformation may prove much more difficult than the liberating struggle. For instance, Kritzingler (1995:387) makes a valid point in the context of what we are trying to indicate by saying:

Racism has not disappeared with the advent of a democratically elected government of national unity; and if the experience of Europe and the USA is anything to go by, it may never disappear. So we also need to give very careful attention in our research and our courses to questions of how to develop ministries in White churches and communities that could have an anti-racist effect in them.

To summarise this issue, one can simply underline the observation made by Klaus Nürnberger (1984:46) when he said, "Decolonisation did not bring much respite. In some ways, the impact of the legacy of colonial times *is being felt only now* (my own emphasis). This is evidenced by the fact that "the mental, cultural, economic and technological dependence of the Third World countries has become more far-reaching than ever before".

5.2.5 Indigenous People in the Wake Modernity and Globalisation

The liberation of South Africa placed the country on an equal footing with other African countries where colonialism had ruled and decolonisation had taken place. However, the forces that had shaped Europe since the fifteenth century shaped the world into which the new democratic South Africa and the rest of other African country emerged. Economic systems, political systems educational systems, health services, administration, warfare, international relations, nation-states, markets, financial systems, communication systems, etc., are all products of modernity that originated in Europe and now influence all societies including the indigenous peoples of South Africa.

The impact of this influence is such that it makes it hard to sustain the ideals of the African forefathers about their customs, cultures, etc. Rauche (1976:52) remarked about the extent of this impact by saying, "By the irruption of Western culture and civilization into the South African sub-continent, this harmonious *Weltanschauung* of the mythological African was undermined". Hastings (1967:31) makes a relevant point when saying that Africans today were being drawn more and more into the new great cosmopolitan culture of the modern world: a culture that, in its chief lines, is non-national, infinitely complex and yet ultimately unified.

Western culture and civilisation are also nourished by education which in turn undermines African mythologies. Again Hastings (1967:31) points out that African schools and universities were shaped upon European ones. Within them the future leaders of the continent receive some sixteen years of concentrated mental formation of a Western type, while what is most dynamic throughout the continent is moving rapidly in the direction characteristic of the rest of the modern world, still largely inspired and directed by the Americo-European West. He warns that it would be dangerous and pointless for the Church to move effectively in another and contrary direction. If it could be said that there is a vastly complex and diversified but still basically, single world culture coming into existence today, it is also true that the same sort of thing is happening within the Church herself.

In the face of irrupting Western cultures, the critical factor is that a new struggle has begun, and this is implied in what Gehman (1989:21) noted when saying,

Most African nations have been liberated from colonial rule within the past generation. They are now seeking African identity. Rejecting many of the customs and ways of Europeans, they are seeking to re-assert their own traditional ways, including their religion.

The new struggle is a struggle of identity⁷⁴. Africa and South Africa in particular are experiencing an identity crisis. Earlier, Parrinder (1954:10) made a similar observation when he said that the majority of Africans still held to the traditional religion of their fathers, but behind the veneer of the new beliefs of most educated people lie older ideas that would not disappear for a long time yet. This is partly due to the fact that Africans take pleasure in their culture and feel rootless in a dynamic world without it. Culture projects their identity and preserves meanings.

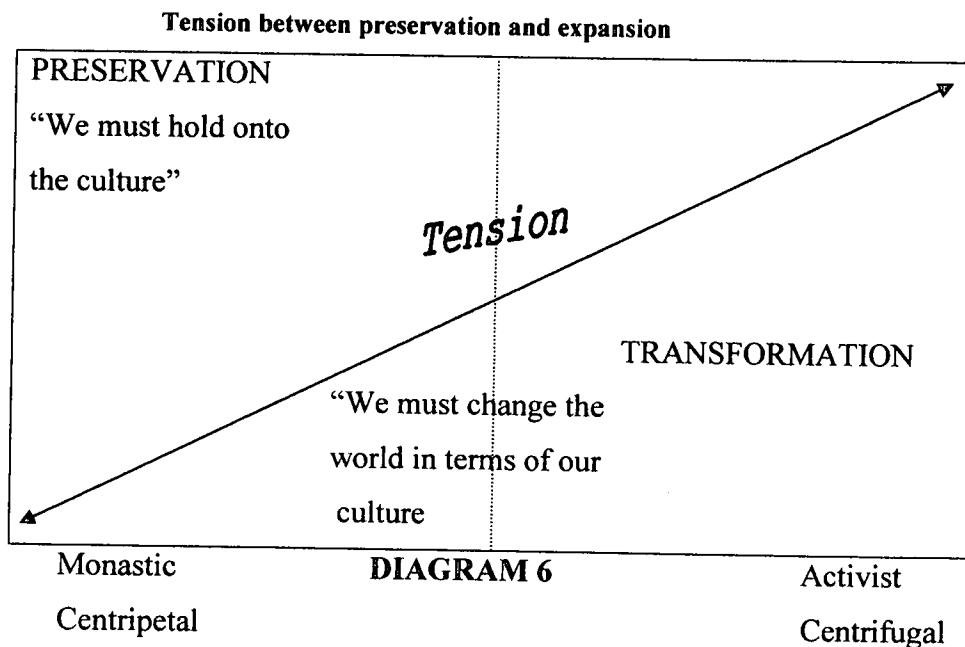
The move is one to rediscover African values like respect and the sanctity of the human person, consensus-seeking as well as community centeredness. This has become a common topic in Radio talk-shows we have mentioned: they seek *ubuntu* as a principle of social and community organization. The critical factor is, South Africa is a multi-cultural and multi-religious society with ATR being one of many religions in South Africa. The country can no longer be described as a Christian state.

⁷⁴ This suggests that human identity is to be found largely in one's own cultural group. The loss of culture is tantamount to the loss of oneself.

The critical dimension, as Kritzinger (1995:358-9) aptly observed is,

Every religious community has the desire at least to “win” the next generation to the faith. In situations of rapid social and cultural change, the task of socialising children of believers successfully into a religious community is not unlike the task facing a “missionary” when encountering people with another religious or cultural allegiance altogether. Every religious community, which want to survive must therefore, engage in some form of mission.

In agreement with Frick (in Kritzinger 1995) he emphasises the close connectivity between expansion (“*Ausbreitung*”) and preservation (“*Beharrung*”) in religious communities. He argues that the urge of expansion was the only thing that keeps preservation from turning into stagnation. This creates a tension between expansion and preservation. We may illustrate this in the following diagram adapted from Kritzinger (1995:359).



Preservation may in part be motivated by the undue urge of resistance. Perhaps one case in point is the attitudes adopted by West Asian regions towards modernization. For example, the nations of West Asia, where Islam soon became the state religion, developed a very confrontational and antagonistic attitude to modernity. They suspected its philosophical underpinnings, rejected its ethical structure and systems and saw it as the satanic enemy of Islam. At the same time there was wholesale importing of products of western technology and science, particularly for consumption. This has led to a ‘cultural schizophrenia.

In concluding this section, it would seem that there is no nation that has it all. Many times fingers would point to a particular nation as the originator of modernity. But there is hardly any nation having all answers to all the problems of the world. Modernity and globalisation are world phenomena the world is trying to grapple with. The point is some nations are far ahead while others are still in the initial stages of the same world system.

5.3 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter concentrated attention on some critical issues characterizing the indigenous people of South Africa: these include culture, religion and politics. On the level of culture, indigenous people of South Africa strive to retain their identity in the face of irrupting global culture. But we also have indicated that the present situation against which force is exerted to balance a look into their past is changing and therefore, dynamic and, therefore, the surface is quite slippery.

What is now happening on the present scene is not logically tied so much to what had happened in the past. The past has now come to partially determine the present. Globalisation⁷⁵ is imposing itself to a great extent on the South African indigenous societies causing great adjustment difficulty from the rapidity of change and adaptation under the impact of external pressures that is characteristic of Africa today.

On the level of religion, a concerted effort was made to characterize the ATR. Ancestral spirits received some special attention; their nature and their role were mentioned. Although African people do not know how to exist without religion, yet we argued that ATR has no an abstract or theoretical system of religious beliefs. It was pointed out that such a theoretical system, if it in fact exists is a new development and at best a creation of African academics.

⁷⁵ Like Bliese (1997), Abraham (1996:87) perceives globalization as a process by which economies of the different countries are integrated to the world capital economy. The most significant aspect of this is the increasing centralization of the world's production and trade in the hands of a few hundreds of multinational companies and financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. It is rooted in the culture of capitalism, whose predominant logic of development is profit making.

At the same time we also mentioned concerns about lack of objectivity in dealing with ATR⁷⁶. It is indeed disconcerting that more often than not, discourses and infrequent media debates about ATR or African culture unfold along the lines of a superficial comparison or contrast between African culture and Western cultures (Idowu 1973; Rauche 1976; Mugambi 1998 Luzbetak 1988; etc.)

Such discourses are predominantly motivated by issues of race and tribe, which are painfully seeking to preserve the mindset that perceives one culture as superior and the other as inferior. This race-tribe oriented approach to the study of ATR limits chances to engage the inner dynamic complexities of the ATR in order to unravel their spiritual value. On the other hand, some are generally content with the objective state of ATR without seeking to investigate, analyse, and explicate the constitutive inner spiritual forces that fuel individual, institutional and collective African cultural imagination.

Discourses of this nature do nothing significantly except reducing ATR to a battlefield of contrasting mindsets resulting in drawing solid distinctions between the "topsiders" and the "undersiders" (Kgatla 1997; van Niekerk, Crafford & van Roy 1999). Being thus reduced into a stage of modelling ethnocentrism (Kalilombe 1981; Setiloane 1986; 2000); the basic holistic function of ATR is largely being overlooked in the interests of academic posture.

Generally, on the level of politics we have attempted to draw attention to the fact that, although South Africa is a democratic state, much still needs to be done in respect of transformation. Transformation is future oriented. However, trends of political independence often give rise to reviving the historical past of the indigenous people's religions, seeking to find a new religious foundation of the new nation.

Moreover, opposition to the political, cultural, and religious domination of the West during the days of colonialism has led indigenous people to return to the faith of their fathers with renewed zeal. We also demonstrated our concern as to how, in the face of

⁷⁶ Perhaps one of the leading factors is that "early books of missionary work in Africa are almost inevitably negative about traditional religions" (Gehman 1989:8). On the other hand it is rather ambiguous that while it is generally agreed that "belief in gods, spirits, divinities and deities is a universal phenomena" (Gehman 1989:214), most studies would tend to confine the same beliefs to the Africans (cf.: Parrinder 1954; Temple 1959; Mbit 1969; Idowu 1973; Gehman 1989; Hammond-Tooke 1994 etc.).

globalisation, indigenous people would transform the country in terms of their culture. In the next chapter, we will investigate some elements of emerging indigenous religious trends.

CHAPTER 6

Elements of Emerging Indigenous Religious Trends

6.1 Introduction

This chapter surveys some elements of emerging driving forces and trends that shape the religious, socio-political context of indigenous people in South Africa. It selects as representative not only those elements or driving forces of emerging indigenous religious trends which attempt to reformulate the Bible as well as the Christian faith in some categories peculiar to Africa cultures, and in a manner supposed to be relevant to the African context in general and South African context in particular, but also those elements which are critical of the Christian mission. Scherer and Bevans (1992:1-20 also Thistlethwaite & Engel 1998) calls these trends and developments "new ways of doing theology."

My purpose in examining elements of emerging indigenous religious trends is to discover the significant challenge they pose to the Church in mission and to evaluate the same challenge, if any, in the light of the Bible. On the other hand, I would like to explore whether elements of emerging indigenous religious trends in South Africa afforded the Church an opportunity to withdraw in consideration of the glaring failures of the past or an alternative opportunity of declaring its faith. I want to explore what the Christian Church should do which it has not done significantly in the past if emerging indigenous religions provided Christianity an opportunity to declare its faith. In order to put the significance of this theme into focus a brief reflection on the background of the situation is in order.

Until recently Western theology has been unconscious of the cultural assumptions behind its reading of the Scriptures and its transmission of the Christian message in a given cultural context (Bosch 1991; Maggay 1998). Being convinced about the universality of the Gospel, missionaries saw their task as the transmission of the Gospel and wherever conditions dictated otherwise, the adaptation, acculturation or indigenization of it.

However, by the time it was realised that “there has never yet been a great religion which did not find its expression in a great culture. There has never yet a great culture which did not have deep roots in a religion” (Maggay 1998:362), Western theology already had dominated the African theological scene (Bosch 1991).

But “the kind of Christianity that has come to us is what has been called ‘culture Christianity’, a religion rooted in cultural memory rather than a fresh interaction with the ancient faith enshrined in Scriptures” (Maggay 1998:362). Beside that we have seen in the course of this study that there is indeed a latent ideological triumph on the part of the West to have globalised its culture while in the rest of the world this had constituted intellectual defeat.

Mugambi (1998:346) reveals a similar view when saying, “Tropical Africa seems to be the only place where the Christian missionary enterprise has destroyed the confidence of people in their own cultural and religious heritage”. Moreover he says:

The invasion of Africa’s living rooms and villages by the means of mass media from the affluent nations of Europe and North America makes it difficult for the people of Africa, both young and old, to affirm their cultural integrity...The days when culture was the manifestation of a people’s integrity are gone. Today, culture is what the transnational corporations say it is: buying and selling goods and services in the name of progress and civilization.

This globalisation of Western theology and culture in the process had marginalized indigenous religions and cultures. But that is not all; the globalisation of Western theology and culture divided African societies between the modernists who readily accepted the benefits of Western cultures and the traditionalists who, whilst enjoying the benefits of Western cultures, yet experience severe defeat in the intellectual level. Chinchon (1998:199) noted this division in Kenya and narrates what is taking place as follows:

Traditionalists oppose the aping of Western values and can be quite vocal about it. They point with disdain to some promoters of modernization who have made themselves slaves to Western culture by selling off their heritage and grabbing for all that glitters: dollars and degrees.

However, as much as traditionalists oppose Western values, they appear to be swimming upstream, in trying to do so. The reality on the ground is changing. Young Africans are celebrating Western oriented events such as St. Valentines day⁷⁷, Christmas, Easter, Workers' Day, Fathers Day, Mothers' Day, Children's Day, to name but few. African oriented events hardly hit the headlines of world calendars. Chinchon (1998:200) has this to say in this regard:

Africa's cultures are quickly being transformed into Western cultures because modern educational, medical, and technological systems redefine much of social reality. The world seems to be headed for a Western future. Realists know that no culture today can do without borrowing and assimilating the new Western technologies into its own cultural fabric.

The globalisation of Western theology went hand in hand with the globalisation of capitalism, which in South Africa was established at a high cost, involving land seizures, discrimination against indigenous people, and the loss of human life on the part of indigenous people⁷⁸. Today, capitalism in the context of Western cultures, is well established in South Africa but there conditions of inequality exist in the society: the rich get richer and the poor even poorer.

As a result of this domination, Western capitalism and Christianity have come under severe criticism from some Liberation theologians in general and Black theologians in particular. This has credited Black Theology as a "sharp negation of traditional 'Northern' Christianity in South Africa. Black theologians often use expressions such as 'reject', 'discredit', or 'debunk' when referring to aspects of 'Christian civilisation' in South Africa, thus revealing their moral outrage at the state of affairs" (Kritzinger 1989:85). Central to this negation is the criticism of White missionaries "since they

⁷⁷ Chinchon (1998:198) observed "Valentine's Day has taken Nairobi by storm! Women in the offices are wearing red, men can be seen carrying a bouquet or red roses to their sweethearts, signs of Cupid are everywhere".

⁷⁸ According to Prozesky (in Wolfaard 1993:164) "What differentiates the country's (South Africa) religious identity from the global pattern is of course the great preponderance of Christians and the support a majority of white Christians have given to the grossly exploitative political economy of the country. Conversely, it is important for Christians to remember that in the experience of black people, the gospel arrived here in tandem with deeply destructive political and commercial forces which have succeeded in making two of South Africa's indigenous faiths, those of the Khoikhoi and the San, extinct within our borders, have destroyed all the once-independent politics of the pre-European period and massively exploited all their survivors, and have extensively eroded the ancestral faith of the Bantu-speaking peoples" (cf. Mueller 1980).

were intimately involved in the process of colonisation". The aim is to unmask the "scandal" of the complicity of missionaries⁷⁹ in the dispossession of Black people.

These theologians have realised something more serious than simply being socialised into Western cultural moulds — they mourn the loss of African identity. Africans perceive their identity as deeply rooted in their cultures. The loss of cultures means a lot more — there is nothing practically to affirm them as human beings with a rich history like other great nations.

Above all is the fear of the loss of nationhood. It is in these contexts that Black theologians attempt to challenge the ideological triumph of Western nations, which had relegated the cultures and customs of indigenous people from public to privacy. By severely criticising Western theology and cultures, Black theologians are under the assumption that "the superimposition of Christianity over the African cultural and religious heritage has been partly the result of the close association of 'evangelisation' with 'Europeanization', to the point where both terms have become interchangeable" (Mugambi 1998:343).

Sad to say, however, that although Western missionaries evangelised Africans through integration into western cultures, and Africans so westernised expected to be accepted as equals by their evangelisers, this hardly did happen⁸⁰. Today, talk is about First World, Second World, and Third World in spite of the fact that Africans had absorbed western cultures. Sometimes Third World Countries are simply considered "Developing Worlds". On the other hand, it is not certain whether Africans who had undergone formal missionary education and training would have completely abandoned their indigenous cultures if they were been accepted as equals in the missionaries' fold.

Now, since it appears that Africans have lost their culture and their identity through being "Europeanized" or "Christianized" and that the situation seems to be confusing, Black theologians see it as their task to lead the way in re-evaluating African culture in order to sustain African identity in the face of the "dust storm of change" (Chincen

⁷⁹ It is important to point out that not all missionaries were complacent with the harassment of the indigenous people by the colonialists. Many of them protested, and others became outspoken and were deported.

⁸⁰ "For although missionary churches preached equality, African ministers were regarded as inferiors with no immediate prospect of attaining full equality" (Reader 1988:285).

Now, since it appears that Africans have lost their culture and their identity through being “Europeanized” or “Christianized” and that the situation seems to be confusing, Black theologians see it as their task to lead the way in re-evaluating African culture in order to sustain African identity in the face of the “dust storm of change” (Chincen 1998:203). Thislethwaite & Engel (1998:3) explain some of the roles of these theologians, called “organic intellectuals” as follows:

These theologians have come to accept as their tasks the representation of the community, the articulation of a foundation for the intra-and extra-communal demands, and the specification of the fundamental elements appropriate to the community’s possibilities for knowledge and analysis of reality...The organic intellectuals of the liberation movements around the world, or liberation theologians, are not part of an intellectual elite that fabricates ideas for the theologically illiterate and helpless masses. Rather, they are formally trained individuals who, because they are engaged in the struggle for liberation of a particular community and committed to it, contribute their skills of analysis to their community’s discernment of the way of life.

However, Liberation theologians do not only challenge the monopolisation of hegemony of the West, but also struggle to establish their own identity. They seek to rewrite their own history, which will re-affirm them as people with cultural heritage (Kritzinger 1989).

Many of these theologians themselves, however, are either Christians, or came under the strong influence of Western thought and Christianity, having attended mission school, while others had been educated abroad in western countries; “they are Christian believers, most of them church ministers, and they are intensely concerned with the relevance and credibility of the gospel among Black people in South Africa” (Kritzinger 1989:78).

These enlightened nationalists or organic intellectuals wanted to reform or “de-Westernise” African societies by rehabilitating some African customs and ATR, in an attempt to reconstruct the African identity supposed to have been decimated during the process of Westernization (cf. Mthembu 1996). Kritzinger (1989:163) says that the stress on a critical re-appropriation of African culture had been part of the Black Consciousness approach right from the start. In Black Theology,

The emphasis lies equally on the process of Africanisation – an attempt to revitalise certain significant cultural elements of the Black people's worldview – and on socio-political liberation (Goba 1981c:53).

The general move is one of counterbalancing colonial and Christian missionary activities and thus attempting to bring to an end what is supposed to be Western hegemony, which often took the form of paternalism and ethnocentrism.

For some African Christian theologians, as we shall see, African theology is an attempt to meet criticisms against Christianity as a foreign and dangerous denationalizing force. African theology also represents a search for and an expression of self-identify in Africa in the field of Christian theology (cf. Rausche 1976; Bediako 1992a; 1994). Moreover it stands for the concerns of African theologians to communicate the gospel in thought patterns familiar to the African mind, which is an attempt to present “the water of life in an African cup”.

No uniform pattern or common elements of emerging indigenous religious trends can be observed in an attempt to respond to the Christian faith on the part of Africans. Owing to the diversified historical contexts and socio-religious needs, elements of emerging indigenous religious trends constituted varied theological and philosophical expressions responding to individual contexts⁸¹.

6.1.3 Outline of the Chapter

My overarching purpose in this chapter is to explore whether elements of emerging indigenous religious trends in South Africa afforded the Church an opportunity to withdraw in consideration of the glaring failures of the past or an alternative opportunity of declaring its faith. Having had said so, our purpose in this chapter is to discuss elements of emerging indigenous religious trends under the following titles: 6.2 the Church in mission in the wake of Contextualisation; 6.3 the Church in mission in the

⁸¹ It seems that it is not always correct to talk about “Liberation Theology” as if it was a single concept shared by all. Thislethwaite & Engel (1998:5) point out that there was distinctive emphasises in liberation theologies; they were not clones. “None of them – North American feminist liberation theologies, womanist, *mujerista*, gay and lesbian liberation theologies, African American liberation theologies, Native American theologies, or other, including those who as yet have not found a way to name their theological situation for themselves – is interchangeable with any of the others. Each has its own peculiar interests, emphases, viewpoints, analyses and aims, dependent upon the requirements of its own particular social context.

wake of Inculturation; 6.4 the Church in mission in the wake of African Independent Churches (AICs), 6.5 the Church in mission in the wake of Black Theology, and 6.6 the Church in mission in the wake of African Theology.

An attempt will be made to sketch each of these concepts in broader terms, followed by a brief evaluation. We shall conclude this chapter by offering our summary and complete evaluation, which will prepare us for the next chapter. But before plunging into the subject a word or two about my basic presuppositions is in order.

My first basic presuppositions have roots in Wesleyan tradition. I hold the view that Scriptures are the Word of God and the rule of faith and practice. I believe that humanity is born in sin and cannot save itself from sin, and I regard religion as man's basic approach to reach out to God or as a means to better one's world. Therefore, no religion or ideology competent to save humanity from its predicament – but God in Christ has saved humanity.

My second presupposition relates to the elements of emerging indigenous religious trends, which is the subject under consideration. The importance of these elements lies in the area of social analysis, the commitment to the human situation and their willingness to employ social sciences to portray the human situation in general and the African situation in particular (cf. EATWOT report in Documents on Mission 1985).

However, in doing so the analysis, in spite of heavily using social sciences, had only partial success largely because it does not go deep enough to consider critical principles raised by the doctrine of hamatology which I believe would have been enriched by the same. Primarily, though, the analysis loses sight of the whole purpose of God as revealed in the Scriptures. Having said this, we now turn our attention to the Church in mission in the wake of contextualization.

6.2 The Church in Mission in the Wake of Contextualisation

Mention has been made that until recently Western theology dominated the African scene, if not the world theological scene, having been universalised by Western missionaries, mostly during colonialism, largely because it was thought Western

theology has universal relevance. The issue of the *Institute for Contextual Theology* (March 1985) magazines caricatured it as follows:

The Western theology presented to us as a neutral and universal theology has since been exposed to be actually a theology of the liberal capitalist ideology. It is a theology of oppression, exploitation and domination.

To find out about this statement we shall initially consider the nature of contextualization as an emerging indigenous religious element probing its basic presuppositions and its methodology. Then we shall proceed to problematise its assumptions in relation to the Scriptures (the Bible).

6.2.1 Nature of Contextualisation

Possibly the most representative definition of the word "contextualisation" is that developed and advanced in Bosch (1991). The term "contextualisation" became a blanket term for a variety of theological models (Bosch 1991:42), and two major types of contextual theology have been identified, namely, the indigenization model and the socio-economic model.

Each of these types is further divided into two subtypes: the indigenization motif presents itself as a translation or as an inculturation model; the socio-economic pattern of contextualisation can be evolutionary (political theology and the theology of development) or revolutionary (liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology, etc) (Bosch 1991 also Kekana 1988).

The same concept is elaborated by Lourdino A. Yuzon (<http://www.cca.org>) who says that it should be borne in mind that contextual theology is an umbrella term, that is to say there are many, not just one, contextual theologies; for instance, Black theology, feminist theology, Minjung theology (Korea), Dalit theology (India), theology of struggle (Philippines), Latin American liberation theology, are all contextual theologies that have emerged out of particular historical realities to which the liberative aspects of the Christian message are addressed (cf. Thislethwaite & Engel 1988). To this list we can also add State Theology, Church Theology and Prophetic Theology (*Kairos Document* 1986; Concerned Evangelical 1986) which we have examined in chapter 4.

The definition of contextualization given by Rachel Tingle (1992:53) is worth noting. According to this definition:

The *contextualization* of 'theology' is a term used to describe a general approach to theology, which is fundamentally different from that of orthodox Christian theology. Traditionally, theology has as its starting point the Bible or, for those in the Catholic tradition, the Bible and the body of teaching of the Catholic Church. Based on these sources, orthodox theology seeks to discover and present truths about God and about God's dealing with the human race. These truths are eternal and universal. This means that what is known about God and the way He wants his people to behave is essentially unchanging both throughout history and throughout the world.

Perhaps one of the difficulties arising in this approach concerns the term, "theology". Tingle (1992:54) is initially reluctant to regard contextualization as theology by consistently putting the word, "theology" in inverted commas. For instance, "By contrast, contextual 'theology' is deeply relativistic; it is also essentially humanistic, focusing on man rather than God". However, as we have mentioned, one should rather talk about contextual theologies in the plural, since no one contextual theology would be acceptable in all contexts.

In South Africa, the best known types of contextual theology are Black Theology and African Theology. The former "has been the theological dimension to the struggle for the social and political transformation of the conditions of inequalities and oppression in South Africa" (Bediako 1994:14), and the latter "has been the theological exploration into the indigenous cultures of African people, with particular stress on their pre-Christian (and also pre-Islamic) religious traditions" (Bediako 1994:14). Although the two are "soulmates" (Tutu 1987), they will be discussed separately and we shall have more to say about each of them at a later stage. At the moment a word or two is in order about the basic presuppositions of contextualization

6.2.2 Basic Presuppositions of Contextualisation

Fundamentally, contextualization is based on the following critical presuppositions, of which the primary one is that "We all bring our contexts with us to our reading of the Bible" and that "this has always been the case, but it has not always been

acknowledged" (West 1993:12). In reading the Bible, as has often been recognised, "our contexts influence our readings of the Bible" (:13); and that is in itself not wrong but "only wrong if we do not acknowledge and recognise the influence our South African reality has on our readings of the Bible" (:13).

It is often generalised that "Christian theologies have been developed in one context or another in that they reflect related interests, concerns and assumptions of those contexts" (:13). This implies that a person's presuppositions will determine, to large extent, how he understands and interprets Scriptures. Robertson McQuilkin (1983:17) quotes one author with approval who had explained it more succinctly this way:

We must know ourselves...each of us approaches Scripture with his own, or her own presuppositions. These presuppositions are part of our world view, part of our personal theology. In the first instance they relate to the way we regard Scripture. Does it consist of infallible propositions? Is it the record of certain acts of God? Is it an inspired record? Is there revelation outside Scripture? Our views here will dictate how we handle the text. Our minds are not empty when we read or listen to Scripture; what we hear is already partly predetermined by what is already in them; our presuppositions shape what we understand. It is not necessary to argue here for any one particular set of presuppositions, but to insist that we become aware of our own so that when we understand and interpret we know how we are being influenced by them. It is also important that we see that our presuppositions are consistent so that we do not operate with one set at one time and with another at another.

Here, the important issue is not the message that one reads and assumes one understands. The context determines the importance of the message. The implication is, a relevant message in one context is not as relevant in another context. Deist & Burdern (1980:33) have similar views: "Context is an important factor in people's understanding of language in general and texts in particular".

The next one is the assumption that "all theology is, and always been, contextual but in the past most theologians were not aware of this" (Nolan & Broderick in Tingle 1992:59-60 also Saayman 1995:184-200). Moreover, people are living in different countries, with different cultures and different governments as well as experiencing different problems.

Bevans (1992:3) contends that “a study of the history of theology will reveal that every authentic theology has been very much rooted in a particular context in some implicit or real way”. Being unaware of this, all theology is “an enterprise undertaken by people – especially the people of God” (Kekana 1988:5), and could “be used effectively to reflect constructively on one’s faith – to edify oneself. It can be used to justify oppression, slavery, exploitation and detrimental ideological ends, for example, apartheid theology, slavery in the USA, and so on”.

On this basis, “since traditional Biblical theology was developed by Western scholars, it is in fact a contextual theology of the Western bourgeoisie and applicable (if at all) only in such a context and is quite irrelevant anywhere else” (Tingle 1992:60). The Institute of Contextual Theology (ICT) accepted wholesale the discovery made by Johannes Metz (in Tingle 1992:60) that all traditional European theologies are “bourgeois and that they serve the interests of the middle class in a capitalist society”. Later on the ICT (in Tingle 1992:60) declared;

The Western theology presented to us as a neutral and universal theology has since been exposed to be actually a theology of the liberal capitalistic ideology. It is a theology of oppression, exploitation and domination.

The inadequacy of Western theologies to respond to socio-cultural domination became one theme which dominated the fifth conference of EATWOT in New Delhi in 1981 (cf. Documents on Mission 1985). Traditional Western theology “provided an impetus for personal spirituality and for tremendous missionary expansion but was incapable of responding to the social problems of the First World and to the challenges of Third World” (Documents on Mission 1985:231).

In the main “Western theologies failed to provide motivations for opposing the evils of racism, sexism, capitalism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. It failed to understand our religions, indigenous cultures and traditions, and to relate to them in a respectable way” (Documents on Mission 1985:231) Similar series of charges listed on the “indictment” which we do not have much time to specify in detail, were made against Western theologies. The general mood is one of attempting to dethrone, as Tingle (1992:60-1) observed, the historic teaching of the Christian Church. She elaborates:

It can be seen from this that contextual 'theology' amounts to a major assault on the historic teaching of the Christian Church, which it largely empties of its universal and spiritual content. As one traditionalist Catholic theologian, Father Rogriguez Y Rodriguez has said of contextual theologians: 'Totally inverting the theological method, these authors do not proceed *thematically* from God to man, from the interior to the exterior, from the person to society, from individual sin to social or structural sin, but precisely the other way round (*emphasis not mine*).'

Finally, there is the assumption that the Bible is a contextual record. This should not be a problem for those who believe that God is actively involved in the histories of people. "The gospels were products of the Early Church's theologizing for its own situation (*sitz im leben*). The Jesus we see pictured there is a construction of these theologians for purposes of expressing their own Christian self-understanding" (Dunning 1988:591). Perhaps we need to consider some more brief issues related to this. According to Shoki Coe (in Hesselgrave 1984:271), contextuality is

critically assessing context in the light of the *mission Dei*, and contextualization has been advocated as a new way of theologizing which takes into account the dialectical between contextuality and contextualization. The aegis of theologizing has been located in praxis within the world rather than in the exegesis of Scripture. And mission has become a matter of discerning what God is doing in the contemporary world and participating in that task rather than participating in a missionary task delineated in the NT.

Contextualization being "a new way of theologizing" creates crucial issues among evangelical interpreters. Central among these is its approach to the Bible. Traditional theologies have always held that the Bible is the inspired record of God's revelation. The Lausanne Covenant declares that Scripture is "without error in all that it affirms" and that it laid upon everyone the serious exegetical task of discerning exactly what Scripture is affirming (Willowbank Report in Documents on Mission 1985).

The essential meaning of the biblical message must at all cost be retained. But contextualization holds the presupposition that a Bible statement is merely a cultural "hull" that is temporary. It is authoritative only for the original hearers, and may be set aside as not binding on other peoples with other cultures. But the "kernel" of truth hidden in the hull of culture is the enduring principle that is God's will for all peoples of all ages" (McQuilkin 1983:40).

In the framework of contextualization, mission is no longer a matter of “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the end of the age” (Mat. 28:18-20). But, “mission has become a matter of discerning what God is doing in the contemporary world and participating in that task *rather than participating in a missionary task delineated in the NT* (Shoki Coe in Hesselgrave 1984:271; emphasis mine).

The issues discussed thus far prove that contextual theologians seem to have discovered that all theologies are contextual; that Western theology failed to tackle challenges in Third World countries, and so on. In our view, that may be true. However, contextual theologians themselves failed to see beyond Western theology to see the crucified one, who is the Alfa and Omega, the beginning and the end. It is indeed expected that Western theologies should fail as they did, and so other theologies. They are not gods. In themselves they cannot change a situation. They are merely concepts trying their best to understand God. They are, therefore, not the end in themselves. Having said this, we shall now move to consider critical methodology for contextualisation.

6.2.3 Critical Methodology for Contextualisation

Contextual theology is basically human efforts to save themselves from some form of oppression. Human beings themselves became the agent of their own salvation. As we have seen, this means there could be as many contextual theologies as there are many forms of oppression. Crucial to these, though, is the issue that “Contextual theology’s starting point, both in terms of its chronological development and its terms of its general methodology, is not the Bible or the historic teaching of the Church but is, rather, an active commitment to ‘liberation’ from some oppression” (Tingle 1992:54). It is not stated why the starting point of contextual theology would not be the Bible or the historic teaching of the Church.

The first act is thus a historical *praxis* – that is, some experience of political oppression and a political action, often of a revolutionary nature, designed to liberate the oppressed. “To do theology,” says the EATWOT report, “is not academic exercise. Many groups of

grassroots Christians are reflecting thus from their own liberating praxis – at times together with persons of other faiths and persuasions” (Documents on Mission 1985:233).

Social analysis is an indispensable medium and basic equipment for liberating theology (Documents on Mission 1985:213). The contemporary world is the point of departure. A situation describing the contemporary world was thickly depicted in the report of the Third World Theologians at the fifth conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) in New Delhi in 1981 (The Irruption of the Third World in Documents on Mission 1985).

The report points out that the Third World has been seriously disadvantaged. It has basically been supplanted in nearly every aspect, largely by Western culture. Political, and socio-cultural forces, urbanisation, industrialization, education and modern technology, to name but few, are fast undermining many of the old traditional beliefs and practices. “Traditionally,” reads the EATWOT statement, “the masses have been subject to long-term exploitation by their rulers and chiefs or aristocracy. However, prior to colonization by the western powers they had a rather self-reliant economy, with a strong sense of communal solidarity” (in Documents on Mission 1985:213), but that has changed. “The modern world,” says Nürnberger (1984:56) “is characterised by pluralism, relativism, cultural domination and human solidarity”. These forces have eroded the traditional Third World in every aspect and they were incarnate in both the colonisers and the missionaries.

According to Kritzinger (1989:90), “There is unanimous agreement among Black theologians that White Christian missionaries played a major role in undermining the culture of Black people in South Africa”. Pluralism, relativism, cultural domination and human solidarity, as basic characteristics of the modern world did not only erode the traditional world, but also have also combined to reshape it. As Nürnberger (1984:56) points out, the combination of these forces has resulted in the broadening of the horizons, which in turn has had a profound effect on the cultural and spiritual life of the people. The very foundations of the norms of each society are shaken by the discovery of alternative, and some cases superior, cultures and religions.

Consequently South Africa is no longer a constellation of homogenous or ethnic societies. Each society is now exposed to religious pluralism. Pluralism is a situation in which a number of different religions and cultures coexist side by side, questioning one another but unable to overcome one another.

Another result of this is relativism. Nothing seemed absolute any more. Everything is relative; everything could be questioned. Relativisation through encounter with other possibilities coincided with the uncertainties, which had arisen through rationalism and empiricism within the Western cultures. A third result is secularism. Religion was no longer the dominant factor in life. Politics, economics, science and technology were increasingly seen to be autonomous and not based on religious assumptions. Religion was reduced to the private sphere of individuals and groups, and the same happened with cultural values and norms.

6.2.4 Contextualisation and the Problem of the Scriptures

The introduction of the Christian Scriptures (Bible) in South Africa created what has come to be called, “historical dilemma” (Mofokeng (1988:34). Central to the “historical dilemma” is the critical position occupied by the Bible. Effectively the Bible occupies an ambivalent position in South Africa in that it is “the instrument” of both “social control and social struggle” (Mofokeng 1988:34).

These somehow opposing roles “social control and social struggle” prove the extent to which the Bible has entrenched itself in the lives of the Africans. This should be acknowledged. “We need to explicitly state the important place of the Bible in African Christianity,” say Nthamburi and Waruta (1998:190) and elaborate the matter as follows:

As has been realized, the translation of the Bible into an African language provides a very strong medium through which Christian faith is propagated. In Africa the Bible held in high esteem and has authority, which penetrates deep into the spiritual, cultural and social life of a community. People feel that if they have the Bible in their own language they embody God’s revelation and truth.

The Bible first landed on the African shores “through the sometimes uncomfortable but nonetheless successful partnership between colonialism and Christian missionary enterprise” (Mofokeng 1988:34). The missionaries then used it as a radical instrument to penetrate the “the religious heart of Africa, emptied it of all their ‘evil’ contents that led to violent African social structures, corrupt political institutions and a weak economic system” (Mofokeng 1988:35).

Due to the fact that large sections of African people were still solely dependent on subsistence farming and under the rule of African chiefs. But since the arrival of the Bible ‘things fell apart’ – being “emptied of all their ‘evil’ contents African people have accepted a new religion and the Bible as a guide in their lives. They have been introduced to new European cultural values, norms and attitudes and their entire society has been changed” (Mofokeng 1988:35).

The change implied here is of a radical nature as could be emphasised in the following statement “Africa has become radically westernised during the last two centuries” (Thorpe 1992:28). Previously, Pillay & Hofmeyer (1991:232) made very similar observations when they pointed out that with the arrival of the European settlers “came radical changes to the structure and nature of South African society.

Crucial to these changes were the introduction “to South Africa the western (capitalist) concept of individual land ownership” (Saayman 1997:95), education, biomedical system, and the Christian religion, etc. All these combined to inaugurate the western worldview system which virtually supplanted if not displaced the traditional South African worldview at all.

Undergirding these radical changes implied here, however, was the wide-ranging role in which the Bible was used and, “for this work, the defenders of the missionaries argue, they deserve eternal gratitude from Africans” (Mofokeng 1988:35). These are the colonialist administrators who became convinced of the role played by the Bible upon their subjects. However, Mofokeng (1988:36) points out that some Africans do not share the same view. He said,

Bishop Desmond Tutu agrees with this line of thought but adds a critical note with which we agree, saying. “But it remains true to say that they (missionaries) sought to Europeanise us before they could

Christianize us. They have consequently jeopardized the entire Christian enterprise since Christianity has failed to be rooted sufficiently deeply in the African soil since they have tended to make us feel somewhat uneasy and guilty about what we could not alter even if we had tried until doomsday – our Africanness.

“Africanness” may have not changed but clearly it stands disinherited and if not left destitute. For the same reason Mofokeng (1988:34) recalls the statement which create the dilemma that still confronts black South Africans in their relationship with the Bible, and we talked about this elsewhere, he avers,

No statement in the history of political science as well as that of Christian missions expresses the dilemma that confronts black South African in their relationship with the Bible with greater precision and has whipped up more emotions than the following: ‘When the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us let us pray’. After the prayer; the white man had the land and we had the Bible.

This statement, being familiar among “black people in South Africa”, points to the three dialectically realities. First, it shows “the central position which the Bible occupies in the ongoing process of colonization, national oppression and exploitation” (Mofokeng 1988:34). Secondly, Africans “confess the incomprehensible paradox of being colonized by a Christian people and yet being converted to their religion and accepting the Bible, their ideological instrument of colonization, oppression and exploitation” (:34). And thirdly, Africans “express a historic commitment that is accepted solemnly by one generation and passed on to another – a commitment to terminate disinheritance and eradicate exploitation of humans by other humans” (:34)

It will also appear that missionaries relied on the use of the Bible in an attempt to soften the hearts of Africans and would assure slave owners of its benefits. Mofokeng (1988:36) maintains that stories that came from areas where the slave trade and slave labour had been practised would confirm that indictment. He argues persuasively that initial efforts to introduce the Bible to captured Africans were opposed until sceptic slave owners could be assured of the benefits of the Christian missions. For this reason it was initially treason for the slaves to read the Bible and they were “severely punished by their masters if found reading the Bible” (:36).

It is not certain why they would do that. But in assuring slave owners of the benefits of the Bible, missionaries were confident that there were enough materials in the Bible which would enable them to keep their word of making better slaves out of colonized people. Therefore, the Bible, like a double edged sword produced both new religion and better slaves. Although this role played by the missionaries in using of the Bible cannot be defended, Mofokeng (1988:37) indicates that the Bible “still constitutes a problem and a blessing to millions of contemporary African people, both Christian and non-Christian, religious and non-religious”. He elaborates,

And this historic paradox cannot remain unresolved to haunt our coming generation. We have to respond to it with all the zeal and intelligence at our command. But as things stand we can respond best only if we are prepared to learn from the responses of those Black Christians who went before us in order not to repeat their mistakes.

Unfortunately Mofokeng (1988:37) does not state categorically how the “racist oppression and exploitation of Black people” derives directly from the use of the Bible. He leaves room for some measure of speculations. Simply averring that “white Christians used the Bible to justify white superiority and the right of whites to be masters over Blacks” does not explain how such use of the Bible was made.

Clearly then Mofokeng (1988:37) would stretch the argument further to involve “partnership between the gun and the Bible” betraying his own implicit doubt of whether the Bible could account for such a great impact resulting in oppression and exploitation. Even though missionaries could have used revival campaigns to pacify the “Black resistance to oppression”, as he avers, it could not be assumed that those campaigns were held on a large scale effective enough to quell “Black resistance” in general.

Perhaps, on this level, Mofokeng (1988) is working on the Marxist presupposition that the function of religion is to keep the oppressed classes of society happy in their penury by offering them “pie on the sky by and by.” (cf. also *Evangelicalism 1986 & Kairos Document 1986*) – in the context of Marx’s famous dictum that “religion...is the opium of the people”.

Mofokeng (1988) may have further had entertained the concept that the nature of religion, especially Christian religion, renders it incapable of social criticism. There

religion functions (like jurisprudence and morality) as a reflection of the economic substructure. By nature religion is a custodian of the status quo – and particularly when used by the owner to sustain his exploitation of the worker (cf. also *Evangelicalism 1986 & Kairos Document 1986*).

Without belabouring this point any further, one could surmise that there is, however, some measure of reality in the claims Mofokeng (1988) made about the (mis)use of the Bible by the occupiers. But such claims fairly, if not fully, describe the nature of religion, and Christian religion in particular, as if it were the product of fallen human reason.

In fact an analysis of idolatrous worship, as it appears in the Old Testament and New Testament, shows it to be chiefly a catering to the desires, oftentimes the basest desires, of man. It is a way of providing religious sanction for sensuality. It is in this context of fallen human reason that “the Bible has been read to support apartheid by some and to support the struggle for liberation by others, and the Bible continues to be used by some to maintain wealth and power and to struggle for justice and democracy by others” (West 1993:13); or “cases where the interpretation of the text of the Bible has been used to designate one as superior to another...or used to relegate women to a second class status in society” (Nthamburi & Waruta 1998:197). Undoubtedly these perversions highlight the need for revelation and many similar other instances were faulty hermeneutical tools.

The biblical faith, however, stands as in total contradiction to similar approaches using religion to sanction particular ideologies, be they apartheid, Marxist, capitalism, communism or even democratic ideologies. Nothing is too sacred to be made an idol, be it an ideology or religion or otherwise.

One needs only think about Amos in his controversy with Amaziah over the religious approvals of economic injustices in Bethel, or Isaiah’s “Woe is me” when he encountered the Holy One of Israel in the Temple, to know that God does not come to satisfy man’s egocentric desires but to sit in judgement upon them; not to authenticate the status quo but to call for its alteration so as to implement justice in human relations.

Elton Trueblood drives a final nail in the coffin of such illusionistic critiques with these scathing words:

The blunt truth is that the upholders of the doctrine of *Wunschwesen*, from Feuerbach to Freud and beyond, do not know what they are talking about. They have spun a theory without bothering to check the evidence, most of which is never seen in clinics or laboratories. That there have been men whose alleged religious experiences have been highly comforting, wholly in line with their desires, none doubts, but to assert that this has been the universal experience or even the characteristic one is to reveal gross ignorance. If this dogma were true, we should expect all prayer to be self-seeking; instead, we find the recognition of a demand for the most rigorous self-denial and self-sacrifice. Those who have claimed to know God best have found that He demands things almost impossible to perform. How, on the hypothesis of *Wunschwesen* did the notion of the Cross ever enter the world? Pascal seems to be addressing men of our time when he says, "Let them at least learn what is the religion they attack before attacking it is"

God is not a master of the status quo, but of change, "Behold I make everything new" (Revelation 21). One additional observation needs to be made. Unfortunately, not all religions that go under the name of Christian are free from the perversions of fallen human reason. Many in the church still live on the assumption of salvation by works or actions. Furthermore, many in Christendom operate on the premise that Christianity is a means of achieving health, wealth, and success or is an effective political cult. Certain cults are based on these misapprehensions. In such cases of perverted Christian faith, the cause is doubtless the overriding of the revelation of God in Christ with the insights of reasonableness without awareness that this is being done. But since this issue will be explored in some depth in the next section, we will defer further elaboration at this point.

6.2.5 Preliminary Evaluation

We have made a brief survey of contextualization as an element of emerging indigenous religious trends. The nature, methodology and the presuppositions of contextualization have been probed. The content of contextualization basically raises issues with the Bible. It is exciting, though, to realise that many of the issues contextualization wrestles with relate to comparing Western theology and contextualization. Contextual theology

is self-confessedly relevant to human experience while traditional Western theology fails. Western traditional theology is criticised and found wanting when compared to contextual theology. However, we have also pointed out that Western traditional theology is not God. It is reasonable to have expected it to fail.

Without dwelling much on these issues, we do not think any of these theologies and others should have pointed unto themselves as the end – but to God. If we were to be consistent with the concept running throughout this study we would have agreed that no theology can liberate a person, be it Christian theology or liberation theology or otherwise. Only God can.

Theologies are merely concepts and will sometimes differ radically since they all emanate from fallen human beings. They are all relative and fall short of truth, not because they were Western or African, but because they were conceived by fallen minds. The fact that they are contextual or universal makes no difference. This does not mean that they were all unimportant; they help us understand God's revelation, but cannot transform the heart. But they also show how ignorant we have become by clinging to methodology than to God.

The problem on the part of Contextual theology is that we are all invited to consider the notion that God's will for one nation cannot be the same for all nations of the world, and that God cannot have the same message for the world since the context influences the situation more than the text. If God indeed cannot, is he still God at all? That there were no normative moral principles whatsoever which are intrinsically valid or universally obliging, defies all logic⁸². But does not this create the problem West (1993:13) seeks to avoid – the fact that “the Bible has been read to support apartheid by some and to support the struggle for liberation by others, and the Bible continues to be used by some to maintain wealth and power and to struggle for justice and democracy by others”? Is the South African situation the result of reading the Bible from different realities within the South African context?

⁸² In her study, Rachel Tingle says that some of the contextual theologians also attacked orthodox Christian morality. For instance, the South Africa Institute for Contextual Theology stated as one of its projects to “look into the problem of the church's conception of sin, and work to dismantling of the mainlines' conception” of sin (Minutes ICT AGM, 1984).

It goes without saying that Contextualisation is showered in currents of the ideology of competition in that while it acknowledges the validity of the Christian Theology, it insists nevertheless that the full liberating truth is to be found only in its ways of practising theology in a given context.

On the other hand, attempts to explain interpret and formulate the essentials of Christianity in African thought-patterns, helped African thinkers to contribute something to Christian theology. While contributing to the field of apologetics, these attempts to wed faith with reason, revealed theology with natural theology, have had only partial success.

It has, to an extent, made the gospel relevant in the context of African nationalism, religiocultural pluralism and socioeconomic development. It largely mars the beginning of African biblical scholarship and creative theological formulations. Yet none has managed to be faithful either to Christian theology neither in its entirety nor to the context and content simultaneously.

Quite often "context" has become more decisive than the "text" and this is critical. Gerald O. West (1993:12) declares, "We all bring our contexts with us to our reading of the Bible. This has always been the case, but it has not always been acknowledged".

The final authority seems to rest upon context and not on the Bible. More than the special revelation in Scriptures, various social sciences influence and determine the content and scope of African theology. Instead of being theocentric, God in relation to man, it becomes more anthropocentric, man in relation to man or structures.

However, no one philosophy or sociology can provide an adequate framework for Christian theology that is faithful to the revealed content of Scriptures. The quest for relevance in theology, whether, European, American, African or Indian, should not be at the expense of commitment to the finality of the written and living Word. In the next section we shall continue to look at more elements of emerging indigenous religious trends when turning our focus on inculturation.

6.3 The Church in Mission in the Wake of Inculturation

Although this section is entitled “inculturation,⁸³” the corresponding concept of “indigenisation” will also feature. It is not our desire in this section to explicate the meaning of both inculturation and “indigenisation” and the historical origin of the two concepts. Suffice to say that inculturation has been described as the process whereby a pre-Christian rite become endowed with Christian meaning. The original structure of the rite together with its ritual and celebrative elements does not become subject to radical change, but its meaning would be altered by the Church to express the Christian mystery. Sometimes the terms, “inculturation,” and “acculturation” are distinguished. The latter modifies the Roman Catholic rite, while the latter, as we have seen, the cultural rite of the community.

Now to begin with, the status quo of Christianity especially in Third World Countries is supposed to be the consequences of what happened in Western countries which saw the passing of Catholic Christianity to the Christian Empire (Shelley 1982). The Christian Empire was committed to civilise the whole “pagan” world. That the Church consciously assumed the role of a disseminator of culture and a civilising agency was a foregone conclusion (Bosch *et al* 1980:68). This partly accounts for the fact why real evangelism no longer expanded among the “civilised” as it is today. Perhaps it would be helpful if we were to consider some of the reasons for inculturation

6.3.1 Some Reasons for Inculturation Advanced

Although issues of inculturation go hand in hand with criticisms of Western civilisation and Western culture supposed to have been imposed on indigenous peoples, yet Martin Ott (1998) correctly brings the real issue to the fore. In agreement with A. Shorter (1988), inculturation should be understood as an on-going dialogue between Christian faith and culture and happens almost automatically. It is rather the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures (Ott 1998).

⁸³ Inculturation has been associated with the Roman Catholic cultural strategy, while indigenisation with the Protestant cultural strategy (cf. Hestenes 1985).

The chief reason for inculturation has not been to correct the mistakes of the early missionaries; neither would it have been to give value to African cultures, nor an attempt to instil self-esteem on the part of the Africans. Inculturation is the imitation of Christ. Christ became incarnated and became a Jew and was enculturated in the Jewish culture and only by being a Jew could he redeem Jewish culture, and therefore, human culture as a whole (Orr 1998:91).

There is harsh criticism of Europeans' (White missionaries) destruction of African culture. The charge sheet runs something like this, "When Christianity came to South Africa with Europeans, primarily in the nineteenth century, indigenous social institutions were either destroyed, suppressed or modified...African societies and their traditional institutions became to some degree Christianized, colonized and westernized" (Mthembu 1996).

Similarly, "When the first missionaries came, they neglected and despised our cultures. We had to abandon our own culture. But now as we have matured in our Christian faith we take the responsibility for our own shape of Christianity. By valorising our local culture and integrating it into our Christian faith, we correct the mistakes of the missionaries and re-establish self-esteem and pride in our culture" (Ott 1998:91).

In addition to these, "There is unanimous agreement among Black Theologians that White Christian missionaries played a major role in undermining the culture of Black people in South Africa. They use expressions such as "suppression", "erosion", "impoverishment" and "betrayal" to describe this negative effect of Christian mission on African culture" (Kritzinger 1989:90).

To a great extent, the Church is regarded as a "racist institution" (1989:108), a "colonial institution" (1980:116) and, on the other hand, Christianity is linked to racist oppression (1989:98), "capitalist exploitation" (1980:120). It is even "still a common practice today, especially in South Africa, to speak of 'Christian Western civilisation'" (Bosch *et al* 1980:64). These assertions and similar others deserve to be examined and be explained. We shall initially consider the Christian faith during the period of Catholic Christianity, and will move on to consider the Christian faith during the period of the Christian Empire.

6.3.2 The Christian Faith during Catholic Christianity

Bosch (1991:447) characterises inculturation as representing a second important model of contextualising theology. He is of the view that, like liberation theology, inculturation is of recent origin – being one of the patterns in which the pluriform character of contemporary Christianity manifests itself. Moreover, inculturation is one of the most widely used concepts in missiological circles.

The fact of the matter is, as Bosch (1991:447-8) noted, that the Christian faith never existed except as “translated into a culture”. This circumstance has been an integral feature of Christianity from the very beginning and has become abundantly clear.

Perhaps one case in point is the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when everyone heard the Gospel in their own languages. This underlines what Bosch (1991:448) says about the early Church which was born in a cross-cultural milieu with translation as its birthmark. In addition to this one of the historical resolutions of the first Council of the Church in Jerusalem required non-Jewish Christians not to adopt Jewish customs in addition to the Christian faith (Acts 15). However, they should also abandon of some of their cultural habits which were not compatible with the Christian spirit.

Besides having translation as its birthmark, it is also evident that the Early Church was born in the midst of major intellectual traditions (Dryness 1984). Prominent among these were Greek philosophy; Mystery religions; Gnosticism; Ebionism and Montanims (Bosch *et al.* 1980).

Each of these traditions, and probably many others, had an element of truth and this had influenced some, such as Justin Marty positively to feel “that good culture was a reflection of the divine Logos and preliminary training for the gospel” (Dryness 1984:213). This seems to have been the prevailing approach under Catholic Christianity. Others, however, agreed with Cerulean (in Dryness 1984:213) who insisted that “culture was the locus of sin and that salvation involved an ethical separation from surrounding influences”; and he further “objected to the tendency among his peers to present the gospel in Greek philosophical trappings in order to make it acceptable” (cf. Bosch *et al* 1980:40).

However, it became increasingly clear that if the church was to communicate its message in terms the world understood, it too, like the New Testament Church had to make use of current expressions. "The ideas of infinitude and eternity, which the Greeks were reluctant to apply to God; the Near Eastern idea of a transcendent source of all things influenced later formulations of the doctrine of creation; and Platonious's intelligible world was used to describe the New Jerusalem and to formulate a way to God from within" (Dryness 1984:213).

This again underlines the fact that "the Christian faith never exists except translated into a culture" (Bosch 1991:447); and that "Evangelisation loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life" (Pope Paul VI in Healey 1992:119).

For similar reason the Church was "inculturated in a great variety of liturgies and contexts – Syriac, Greek; Roman, Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopian, Maronite, and so forth. Moreover, during this early period the emphasis was on the local church rather than the church universal in its monarchical form" (Bosch 1991:448). These developments had a tremendous impact on the church.

This does not mean that Christians simply appropriated the cultures of the time uncritically. At other points, Christianity was breaking sharply with these influences (Dryness 1984:213) creating conditions of distress. The critical point is, had the church fathers continued to collaborate with these movements, "this would have entailed the sacrifice of certain basic elements of the gospel, the three of which recognised by Bosch *et al* (1980:44) as: (1) the canonicity of the Old Testament; (2) the historicity of Jesus, and (3) the reality of the resurrection". Generally, however, the pre-Constantinian church did not regard itself as a disseminator of culture.

6.3.3 The Christian Faith during the Christian Empire

The conversion of Emperor Constantine (A.D. 312) decisively marked “the passing of the Age of Catholic Christianity, and the beginning of the Age of the Christian Empire” (Shelley 1982:105). Both the position and the character of Christianity changed. It became possible for a particular civilization (Western) to be identified with Christianity and “the repercussions of Constantine’s victory are still felt today” (Bosch *et al* 1980:63). Both the concepts that speak of Christianity as a Western Civilization and that Christianity was an “exclusively European affair, could be traced back to the Constantine’s victory over Maxentius in 312 A.D” (Bosch *et al* 1980:64).

Identifying Christianity with a particular civilization had equally profound implications for mission and the interpretation of mission ahead. Bosch (1991:298) aptly paints the picture better for us when he says:

The Western missionary enterprise of the period under discussion proceeded not only from the assumption of the superiority of Western culture over all other cultures, but also from the conviction that God, in his providence, had chosen the Western nations, because of their unique qualities, to be the standard-bearers of his cause even to the uttermost ends of the world. This conviction, commonly referred to as the notion of “manifest destiny”, was only barely identifiable during the early decades of the nineteenth century but gradually deepened and reached its most pronounced expression during the period 1880 – 1920.

The role of the church changed from having faith in the power of God to transform individuals and societies and to becoming a civilising agency and “its mission outreach thus meant a movement from the civilized to “savages” and from a “superior” culture to “inferior” culture – a process in which the latter had to be subdued, if not eradicated” (Bosch 1991:448).

In contrast to the early church, the church of the Constantinean era no longer took other religions seriously and “Christianity, and more particularly the official church, laid claim to absolute truth; the gods of the “barbarians” were either demons or “nothing” – front of satanic powers” (Bosch *et al* 1980:69). Moreover,

By the time the large-scale Western colonial expansion began, Western Christians were unconscious of the fact that their theology was culturally conditioned; they simply assumed that it was supracultural and universally valid. And since Western culture was implicitly regarded as Christian, it was equally self-evident that this culture had to be exported together with the Christian faith.

In the previous chapter we have seen briefly the extent to which White settlement in South Africa had a negative impact on ATR in that early missionaries adopted a programme of evangelism by assimilation⁸⁴. Christianity was used as a pretext for Europeanisation and non-European nations simply had to conform to European customs and practices.

6.3.3.1 Christian Empire and Cultural Adaptations

However, it was then the normal course of events that missionaries would resort to conciliatory approaches to indigenous cultures, and prominent among these approaches are indigenisation and adaptation, as well as accommodation (Bosch 1991). Here it would generally allow the use in church of those cultural practices which have not been “contaminated” by ATR; this being in itself some measure of concession.

The good news of Jesus Christ is communicated through the experience of the African people themselves within their local environment and life situation. God’s self revelation through peoples in concrete history makes the African people (like people everywhere) a fifth gospel (Healey 1992).

6.3.3.2 Christian Empire: Some Implications of Adaptation

Beside that, however several factors militated against accommodation. Bosch (1991:448-9) lists the following:

⁸⁴ Missionaries planted churches in Africa, which more or less resembled those of their home. They were universalizing their church and theology.

First, accommodation never included modifying the “prefabricated” Western theology. Second, it was actually understood as a *concession* that Third-World Christians would now be allowed to use some elements of their culture in order to give expression to their new faith. Third, only those elements which were manifestly “neutral” and naturally good, that is, not “contaminated” by pagan religious values, could be employed. Fourth, the word ‘elements’ further implied that cultures were not regarded as indivisible wholes but, in Enlightenment fashion, as separate components that could be put together or disassembled at will. Fifth, it went without saying that indigenization or accommodation was a problem only for the “young” churches. In the Western church indigenization had for many centuries been a *fait accompli*; the gospel was perfectly at home in the West but still foreign elsewhere. Sixth, a term like “adaptation” could not help but convey the idea of an activity that was peripheral and therefore nonessential, even superficial, as far as the essence of the Christian mission was concerned. Seventh, this entire project suggested, implicitly and often also explicitly, that the younger churches needed the older churches but that the latter were in no respect dependent on what they might receive from the former; the traffic was decidedly one-way. Last, often the imitative in missionaries with a sentimental interest in exotic culture, insisted on the “otherness” of the young churches and treated them as something that had to be preserved in their pristine form

It is apparent that while indigenisation and accommodation generally allowed some freedom, “in the main they worked for an exact reproduction of European models” (Bosch 1991:450). Generally, to be Christians, Africans were simply required to conform to custom practices of Western nations. Discontinuity with African cultures was thus sealed.

6.3.4 Preliminary Evaluation

Although it has become common to speak about “Western Christian civilisation,” especially in South Africa, it seems that these concepts might need reevaluation; the fact that most Westerners would regard Christianity as their own culture, and the indigenous people would regard Christianity as synonymous with Western culture. We have constantly to remind ourselves that Western cultures are not what they used to be today. What today is considered a “Western culture” is partly the result of its encounter with the Gospel.

According to Gehman (2005) Western nations are familiar with magic, divination, and witchcraft⁸⁵. We all know that some Western nations were slave masters until slavery was abolished through the influence of Christianity⁸⁶. Through its teaching, Christianity helped /improved conditions of women and children and improved moral life.

Reducing Christianity to a mere culture of a particular nationality has been a gross oversight on the part of some scholars⁸⁷. It all betrays one's attitudes towards history. History would have taught the world that prior to the arrival of Christianity in Western nations, their life and practices were indifferent to the gospel of Christ. Perhaps Ott's warning deserves some attention: "The term, 'inculturation' might serve as a sophisticated tool for camouflaging a chauvinistic reception of the Christian message and a fashionable way of avoiding conversion⁸⁸" (1998:92). This does not discount the fact that many atrocities were committed under the cloak of Christianity on the part of some nations, for instance Apartheid in South Africa (cf. van der Walt 2003).

In actual fact, inculturation presupposes that a full-scale conversion has taken place on the part of indigenous people, while it has not. In the same breath, indigenous people should not shy away from having a full encounter with the Christian faith by hiding behind the cloak of inculturation.

Sometimes inculturation could simply be the means to save one's own skin. This does not mean that African cultures do not have anything to offer at all, but everything to receive. Ott (1998:92) correctly points out those African cultures could offer a lot by their concepts of African leadership and of African hospitality. However, African

⁸⁵ Gehman (2005:142) goes on to say, "President and Mrs. Reagan were known for their superstitions, observing rituals such as knocking on wood and walking around and not under ladders. The President used to put a lucky gold charm in his pocket every morning. Although President Reagan seemed to have a deep Christian faith he was apparently untroubled by the contradictions of depending on mystical powers of astrology even while professing faith in Christ.

⁸⁶ According to Ott (1998:93), "The fact that the gospel (or Christianity) helped to develop certain values within human history (like equality of men and women, abolishment of slavery, dignity of each human life, option for the poor, option for others in their otherness) is a fruit of the incarnation aspect of Christian faith."

⁸⁷ It is regrettable that "The academic problem of this refusal (or cowardice) to encounter the Christian faith in a particular culture is a lack of knowledge in church history and in history of the doctrine" (Ott 1998:95-6)

⁸⁸ Ott (1998:92) continues to say, "It is not a privilege of African Christians to bypass the challenge of conversion for the sake of a wishful contextualization. The Biblical reference to this way of behaviour could be Lk. 11:24, where Jesus talks about the evil spirit who, after already being banned, returned. The passage refers to a neophyte who was converted but after failing to keep in line with Christian life, relapsed. The Bible provides interesting details. The spirit finds the home 'swept and decorated' and takes 'seven different spirits with it. More wicked than itself. And the final condition of that person is worse than in the beginning.

leadership does not automatically become Christian leadership, nor is African hospitality Christian.

Another reality seeming to discourage moves toward inculturation is the fact of globalisation. Too much emphasis on cultural and ethnic differences may border on re-tribalisation. Current developments, however, seem to be recognising cultural diversities and yet deliberately emphasising common values in an attempt to develop a common worldview.

While we may not dwell longer on issues of globalisation, we may use this opportunity to point out that the world has more serious things to worry about than inculturation – issues which are a challenge to every nationality, and these include relativism, individualisation, secularism, and the culture of the New Age Movement. The issues mentioned above have no connection with the past which some of us treasure so much. Self, not the community, has now become the centre of focus.

Our evaluation should not be understood to mean that there should be no diversity in so far as Christianity and culture are concerned. People will always differ in one or more aspects. But the differences should not be legislated and become means of unfair discrimination against other people.

I would like to agree with the concept much expressed in religious circles to this effect, “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty, and in everything, charity”. Christians in the early church differed on what is non-essential. It appears that culture was on the item of non-essentials (Gal. 3:28); sometimes even some kind of food was on same list. But they were all united around the teaching of the apostles and their faith in what God had done for them in Jesus Christ.

6.4 The Church in Mission in the Wake of African Independent Churches (AIC)

"If Christianity's claim to be universal is to be believed," says Bishop Peter Sarpong's statement, "then it is not Africa that must be Christianized, but Christianity that must be Africanized" (in Healey 1992:118). Likewise, Kritzing (1995:377) warned, "Somebody who wants to make a difference to contemporary South Africa simply has to be aware of the issues involved in religious pluralism, intercultural communication, political liberation and the growth of African Initiated Church". In agreement with this statement, this is now what we are doing in this chapter.

Here we would like to say that had it not been for the emergence of the phenomena pervasively known as African Initiated (independent) Churches (AIC) which in many ways provided an escape duct, ATR would have fundamentally been dealt a blow. AIC emerged "as churches of compromise, in which elements of the Christian tradition as represented by the Bible and those of traditional religion as conveyed by African oral tradition are synthesized" (Mofokeng 1988:34). AIC have been understood as "new kinds of Church" (Pretorius & Jafta 1997).

Although grouped under a single umbrella, AIC are a diverse constellation of groups ranging from embracing Christian fundamentalism to moderation⁸⁹ on one hand and to complete collaboration, if not identical with ATR, on the other. Godfrey Ngumi (E:/AICS.HTM) noted that

these Churches have maintained an expression of African beliefs within Christianity, or the extension of African traditions on Christian doctrines. Most of the leaders of these Churches prefer them to be termed 'Holy Spirit Churches'. Indeed, there are hundreds of African initiated Churches with the prefix "Holy Spirit" in their full name. The claim is that they are the work of the Holy Spirit blowing in whichever way he wills, not bound by structures and doctrines.

Although having broken with mission churches and/or had been initiated by Africans, seldom would these churches use African languages to describe or name themselves. Many would prefer to identify themselves in English words such as, "Apostolic

⁸⁹ It should be borne in mind that AICs carried the legacy of their individual mission churches from which they broke and this after a long exposure to missionary activities.

Nazareth Jerusalem Corinthians Church in Zion, Bethlehem of Judea Church of South Africa, Ephesians Mission Church, Cush Nineveh Church” (Pretorius & Jafta 1997:211). It is not certain why English names are often preferred if Africans sought to retain or revive their cultures. However, some other names used to describe them are negative as may be seen from what Pretorius & Jafta (1997:211) had to say:

The names by which this movement has been called, some of them dubious or derogatory, reflect primarily the attitude and perspectives of church and government officials and scholars. They have been called native, separatist, heretical, proselytic, quasi-Christian, millennial, magico-religious, neo-pagan, syncretistic, and cultic.

Not only did AICs maintain an expression of African beliefs within Christianity, or the extension of African traditions on Christian doctrines but they also resemble ATR in their practices. Here, the role of the Holy Spirit is conspicuously not normative or inhibited but pervasive and emancipated. It is the distinguishing mark between themselves and mission churches regarding themselves, as previously noted, as spiritual churches *inkonzo zoMoya* while they regard mission churches as *inkonzo zoMthetho* or churches of the law (Pretorius & Jafta 1997).

Emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit on the other hand compensates for some lack thereof in some mission churches and mainline churches. Time will not allow us to draw some comparisons between mission churches and “Spiritual Churches”.

Resembling ATR more or less in this connection, here “The Spirit is believed to seize and possess the person concerned, in what is called the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But alongside the Spirit, some churches also recognize ‘the spirits’ – ancestral beings who appear in dreams to convey messages for the living. The ‘syncretism’ of these churches is most evident in their incorporation of traditional African religious concepts into their worship. Ancestral spirits mediate between the Supreme Being and human beings, between the Creator and the creatures” (Pretorius & Jafta 1997:222).

In many AICs, the role of the drum (*xigubhu*) which used to be the paramount means of invoking the presence of ancestral spirits but which was silenced in villages near mission stations, has been revived. Drum performances fill the atmosphere of worship. In some churches the spirit of Christ does not make a distinction between *sangomas* who employ the use of the medium of ancestral spirits in worship and those who profess

to be possessed. *Sangomas* are unconditionally welcome to practise their own ancestral religions within the sphere of "Christian worship". This means that AIC are the first churches to inculturate the Christian faith if ever inculturation meant the integration of ATR and Christianity.

During heyday of colonialism and mission and the days that followed, the use of drums was often regarded with suspicion and often forbidden in mission churches. The sounds of the drum near mission stations were generally intolerable. The use of drums was closely linked with demon worship. Perhaps the following incident taken from one missionary's report may illustrate the subject under consideration:

A few months ago I was at our Tavane station in Gazaland, where we were in the midst of the Quadrennial Meeting. On Sunday groups had gone out to preach in the surrounding countryside, but it had been my lot to remain at the main station. The midday service over, I went to my room to rest for a while. But as I lay down and became quiet, the sound of demon drums from somewhere out in the bush began to fill my ears. I could lie there no longer, but got up and went to the Christian village, where I found a man to go with me. We set out in the direction of the drums. As we drew near to them they stopped, and soon we heard the sound of a Christian hymn floating over the air. One of the parties of workers returning from the day's preaching had also heard the drums, and had turned aside from their path and reached the kraal before us. When we arrived, there were the drums all right, three of them of varying sizes arranged a little way before the door of the hut where the possessions of an ancestral spirit were kept. On a grass mat beside the drums sat a young woman witch doctor, her short-cropped hair smeared full of red mud, her eyes downcast save for sly, darting glances in our direction, and her thin lips and small, hard face touched with a tingle of wistfulness that softened her evil expression. Lying on the mat before her was a young, demon-possessed woman covered with a cloth, and seated around about on mats, or logs, or in the sand was a group of perhaps twenty or thirty men, women and children. We sang and read the Word, preached and exhorted, and several of the group came forward for prayer and expressed a desire to turn from their darkness into the Light which is Jesus. After praying with them, we approached the witch doctor and, kneeling down before her, exhorted her also to turn from her evil ways of deception and wickedness and give her heart to the Lord. But she would not answer. We told her that we could not force her to become a Christian, but that she must choose for herself to leave the works of Satan and give herself to Christ. We asked her over and again if she would not like us to pray for her and if she would not like to repent. Finally she barely opened her lips and whispered some of the saddest words I have ever heard, "*A ndzi swi koti*" ("I am not able"). How truly she had spoken! Bound from birth by the power of Satan and evil superstition and habit, Africa's dark millions – and other millions the

world over – are not able to help themselves or to ask for help. Only as we wear smooth the paths that lead to their homes and take the gospel into their doors will they ever find the One who “breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free” (from William Esselstyn⁹⁰ 1952:70-71).

Restricting the use of drum in Christian worship deprived Africans of their natural spontaneity in worship and this also contributed to the split from mission churches. Ngumi (E:/AICS.HTM) elaborates further.

Some of the causes of schism are due to misunderstanding on trivial matters to do with the imposition of western culture as a pre-requisite to faith. Issues include wearing suits and shoes for Sunday worship instead of African dress, traditions concerning marriage - for example monogamy versus polygamy, traditional versus rotational leadership, rites of passage as pre-requisite to leadership and even terms of adherence in the membership of the Church.

Not only do AICs resemble ATR in worship, but also in healing. Pretorius & Jafta (1997:223) correctly observed, “The healing ministry is conducted within the traditional African view of the world as permeated by both good and bad spirits. The *iminyama* (bad spirits) are believed to attack innocent individuals constantly. Faith healers counter-attack these bad spirits through prayer and *iziwasho*⁹¹” (Pretorius & Jafta 1997:223).

Indigenous people have many problems with the spiritual world. They have more problems with the manner in which these spirits manifest themselves. Some years ago Ntate Diya⁹² had a small congregation on a farm at De Kroon near Brits. He was a farm labourer. On Wednesday evenings and Sunday afternoons he conducted services in one of his huts.

He used to wear a thin rope of green and red around his head. He helped his fellow farm labourers in the surrounding farms with various problems. Some came to him with bodily ailments, bringing empty bottles with them, and he would order to have them filled up with water and he would pray for them and the contents of the bottle.

⁹⁰ Former missionary of the Church of the Nazarene in Swaziland and South Africa.

⁹¹ “Water mixed with green (or sometimes dry) plants, leaves, salt, or lime as medicinal resource” (Pretorius & Jafta 1997:223).

⁹² Observed by participant in 1976 while working on a farm in De Kroon near Brits

Thereafter he would have them drink the holy water two or three times a day, etc. to cure the ailment. Others would narrate their dreams⁹³ (*pontsho*) to him and he would help to unravel their mystery, and so on. Diya would also regularly prophesy, telling members of congregation of the upcoming dangers lying in ambush on their way in the near future. He would also issue a divine order (*taelo*) to a particular person to purchase certain colours of wool and he would weave them into a rope to be worn either around the waist, neck, legs or hands, in order to ward off the spells (*meleko*) of the witches and sorcerers.

However, he had a fourteen year old daughter who was possessed by a violent spirit. It happened that on occasions the spirit would seize her and she would run out the service toward a busy street and would try to lie in middle of road. Many times she had been snatched off the road before she could lie down there and be crushed by speeding cars. During each service she would be restrained as people realised she was about to do so. The door would be kept closed so that she could not escape.

The whole scene was one in which the spirits and the angels would have unrestrained expression and control. The atmosphere in the service was eerie, confirming once again the fact that "spirits, in combination with sorcery, remain a potent source of physical affliction. However, it is the Holy Spirit, a somewhat fallow feature of mainline Christianity, which is the supreme and distinctive source of Zionist power to do good, to overcome sorcery and to restore health, and communal prayer is the means of tapping and deploying power. Divination is widely retained as a diagnostic technique but is commonly subsumed within prophecy, which relies on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit" (Kiernan 1990:23).

At the same time, "the precondition as well as social correlate of amassing spiritual power is a surge of congregational effervescence and enthusiasm. The more fervent the expression of collective solicitude, the more it evinces belief that the Spirit is present, and the more confidently the work of healing can be undertaken" (Kiernan (1995:125); and the spirits would have some falling while standing or dancing and they would lie seemingly unconscious for some time; others would scream at the top of their voices.

⁹³ "In African life dreams play a central role, as is evident both in African Religion and in African Christianity" (Mbiti 1997:511).

Meanwhile Diya, perceptibly exhausted, would move from person to person lying on the ground, said to overcome by the spirit, laying his hands on them and praying for them speaking in tongues. He would sometimes have one or two persons helping him. The rest of the members of the congregation would remain standing and continue singing fervently and dancing during the whole commotion.

In spite of its similarities with ATR, AIC had largely acted as a buffer between missionaries' incursions to eradicate the remainder of ATR. Being forbidden in mission churches, ATR found a home and thrived among some AIC. In times of crises professing Christians rely on ATR (Idowu 1973; Kiernan 1995 and Gehman 2000). Perhaps similar attitudes in the past may have frustrated the advancement of the missionaries against ATR. This led William Esselstyn (1952:35), a former missionary in Swaziland, to express disappointment in these words:

Sad to say, the century has also seen the coming of many sects. Some are from overseas and are developing strong followings. Hundreds, however, are of South African native origin. Sometimes these sects take very ordinary names, but at other times they take the strangest of names, as "New Creation Baptist Church Star of South Africa" or Ethiopian Church of God the Society of Paradise". Many of them are strongly anti-white. They have arisen partly from a revolt of a discontented element of European mission; partly from a general revolt against white rule; partly because of a blind groping after soul satisfaction by the detribalized natives, not yet become truly Christian but at the same time cut loose from old tribal customs that long rule their lives.

Beside these, large sections of AIC may early have led the way in collaborating with ATR if not being identical to it. Today some prominent African theologians are having second thoughts in regard to ATR. Setiloane (2000:32) has re-evaluated the African beliefs in ancestral spirits and is able to confess, "This may be the reason why many of us have been able to bring *Badimo* (ancestral spirits) into the church with us. In our experience they do not vie or compete with *Modimo* (God). *Badimo* are not *Modimo* and yet they are 'of Modimo' in the same way as *Motho* is 'of Modimo'. Unlike the humans (in the flesh) *Badimo* are perfectly moral, just, and never partial because of consanguinity (family relationships)". Some mission churches, especially among indigenous Africans are encouraging the practice of African Traditional Religion in their churches.

The revival of ATR in South Africa is often fuelled by repeated calls to Africans to forsake what has come to be described as “foreign import religions”, especially Christianity, and to return to the traditional roots – the religion of their forebearers. (Froise 2005)⁹⁴.

Leading these calls vocally is the *Kara Institute* making the revival of ATR not only perceptible in the public sphere but also more conspicuous in the Christian Church and now a growing number of African priests and pastors – especially in the mission founded churches particularly the Catholic the Anglican and the Methodist – have encouraged the practice of African Traditional Religion in their churches.

Froise (2005:16) echoed the same sentiment saying that the animistic beliefs and practices were making a marked impact on traditional mainline churches. This fact is further corroborated by Fisher (1998:5) who says, “Educated Africans see no problem when they return to their traditional customs and religious values”.

Some of these “educated Africans” are from mission schools and have been converted to the Christian faith. They are now reconverting themselves back to the “traditional customs and religious values”. On the other hand, some South African academics “are arguing for African Religion to be recognised as equal to Christianity. Why, they ask, must Africans have to suffer the humiliation of practising their traditional rituals in secret while pretending to be Christians? This, of course, means that the *sangoma* throwing bones will remain the true channel for forgiveness from the ancestors” (Brown 1998:11)⁹⁵.

The conscious call to return to traditional roots implies that the view held by many hitherto that African Traditional Religion is a “non-proselytising” religion (e.g. Thorpe *et al.* 1985:5) has now to be abandoned.

The revival of ATR proves once more that “the African traditional community,” says Joseph Buti Tlhagale (in Rausche 1976:50), “obviously has not yet transcended its mythological thought patterns. The belief in mystical powers is a dominant

⁹⁴ Froise (2005:15ff) mentions the prevalence of spiritism in government, among academics, in secular society and in African Traditional Religion.

⁹⁵ If the Africanisation of Christianity in Africa meant anything at all it would be the welcoming back of indigenous religions in the Christian Church.

phenomenon". This is in spite of the fact of having been exposed to western civilization and perhaps having been "evangelised" for several decades. But no one would have better realised this than Idowu (1973:20) when he said

While, as we have said, every African may wish to be regarded as connected with one or the other of the two "fashionable" religions, most are *at heart still attached to their own indigenous beliefs*. It is now becoming clear to the most optimistic of Christian evangelist that the main problem of the church in Africa today is the divided loyalties of most of her members between Christianity with its Western categories and practices on the one hand, and the traditional religion on the other. It is well known that in strictly personal matters relating to passages of life and the crises of life, Africa Traditional Religion is regarded as the final succour by most Africans (*emphasis mine*).

However, divided loyalty may have been "the main problem of the church in Africa" in the past. Today the African church takes the lead in reshuffling some former Western structural elements to conform African traditional standards. Perhaps this could be seen in some of the ways in which the Eucharist has come to be celebrated lately. Healey (1992:121) observed the prayers for the rite of Eucharist in Zaire and wrote:

The prayers use many features from African tradition. These include an invocation of the saints and of the ancestors "who have served God with a good conscience", many gestures such as the whole community raising up their hands during the prayers and everyone bowing their heads and crossing their arms on their breasts, during the penitential rite; and concrete imagery taken from real life, rather than abstract imagery. Sin is described as "the insect that sticks onto our skin and sucks our lifeblood". The word is the one through whom God has created "our river the Zaire, our forest, our rivers, our lakes. Drums or gongs are beaten at particular moments during the celebration, and during the Gloria there is a dance led by the main celebrant. The celebration concludes with a final dance out of the church. Traditional style vestments and headdresses are worn.

These are attempts to explain, interpret and formulate the essentials of Christianity in African thought-patterns helping African thinkers to introduce "creative liturgy in Africa" (Healey 1992:121). In many ways, depending on the approach of the researcher, African thought-patterns may be regarded to contribute something to Christian theology. Generally they wed faith with reason, revealed theology with natural theology. The question remains whether the Christian church is in the midst of another kind of renewal pertinent to Africans?

6.4.1 Preliminary Evaluation

Both Sundler (1961) and Oosthuizen (1968), amongst others, have investigated AICs but evaluated these movements negatively while Barrett (1968) and Daneel (1974) took a different route. However, later on Oosthuizen and Sundler abandoned their previous views and agreed to adopt Barret and Daneel's assessment.

It is obvious that traditional practices are tenacious and that they form a vital part of many of the healing practices in the AIC today. Mofokeng (1990:47), for instance, calls the AIC "the principal religious custodians of African culture and traditional religion". That proves the fact that a major difficulty presented itself in studying AIC through available literature.

Already evidence has been presented as to how AIC resemble ATR in their practices and it has been further suggested that AIC collaborated with ATR if they were not identical to it. Perhaps the problem lies with the manner, or it the lack of in which AIC are classified. Similar to ATR these clusters are grouped under a single acronym without paying much attention to the fundamental underlying differences within these movements. Like ATR, comparisons are not usually made only between groups of AICs, but between AIC and mission churches.

If some more observations were made about the manner in which these movements were multiplying then it would be obvious that original groups broke away early from mission churches; but now new movements are breaking away from original movements as well – perhaps for more or less the same reasons that the original movement itself broke away from the mission church.

This would not only account for the fact between Western oriented AIC and African oriented ones but also for the fact that "South African has been described as the most overdenominationalised mission field in the world" (Saayman 1990:34). The former (Western oriented AIC) would usually still carry and perpetuate the legacy of the mission church to greater or lesser degree while the latter would usually be fuelled by African cultural nationalism.

In conclusion, we may generally agree that there are several reasons why AIC have come into existence, and although most of these have been discussed and we would like to add one or two more. Perhaps, mission churches would have learnt something during the process. One fact that kept recurring is that mission churches did not accommodate African cultures; they did not have a practical solution to polygamy.

In some mission churches polygamous people are not received into church membership unless they abandoned the custom, and this often meant sending all wives away except for the first wife (Mokoka 1984). Father Gerard has been quoted as saying that polygamy is one of the "very strong fortresses of the devil among the Kaffirs" (in Mokoka 1984:121).

Although this conviction is shared by the vast majority of missionaries, they did not realise that marriage in indigenous cultures often includes bonding of families and not only spouses. What missionaries should have realised or rather emphasised is that, whether in polygamous relationships or not people have spiritual needs.

Having polygamous people attending services without having membership in the congregation is a form of ostracism and discrimination. Often charges are made that polygamy is the expression of lust. But lust is too wide a concept to be rationally restricted to polygamy as if there were no lust in monogamous relationships.

Levirate marriage did not establish rapport with missionaries either. This is in spite of the fact that similar marriages were prevalent among the biblical Jews. However, that does not mean that polygamous relationships were always good and should serve as a model of marriage among indigenous people. Besides that not all indigenous people were in polygamous relationships.

Perhaps the other factor relates to the question of illiteracy. Emphasis on education when serving God is more important. Only those who were educated in congregations were the ones who were mobilised and many people who were illiterate were excluded. It did not come to the attention of a missionary that illiterate people could be useful in some way or another. In my own opinion, AIC played an important role in compensating what has been seemingly lacking in mission churches.

6.5 Church in Mission in the Wake of Black Theology

More often the study of Christian theology is conducted for delight - nourishing one's own soul and wants. "What study can be more delightful and of deeper interest than that of Christian Theology?" asks Bishop Jonathan Weaver (1900). Here knowledge is more important than sincerity of attitudes. It follows also that traditional Christian Theology is written for the atheist. It is rational discourse by Christian theologians in an attempt to convince the atheist about the presence and nature of God and his dealing with humanity.

Our purpose in this section is to draw a brief sketch of Black Theology as an important element of the emerging indigenous religious trends. It is therefore, not our aim to offer a full treatise of Black Theology in a study of this magnitude. In our discourse about Black Theology we shall limit ourselves to the nature and scope of Black Theology, the purpose or the role on Black Theology, and then we shall proceed to study its relations to the Bible, to the Church, Christian Theology and to mission. On the basis of that, we shall offer our evaluation.

6.5.1 Nature and Scope of Black Theology: A Brief Survey

Mention has just been made in section 6.2.1 that Black Theology is one segment of Contextual Theology (cf. Bosch 1991). It is described as "part of the worldwide theological movement known as liberation theology...directed against major social evils of our time and claims to offer a new way of doing theology that contributes to the overcoming of human oppression" (Maimela in Maluleke 1998:57). It is a "multifaceted phenomenon, manifesting itself as black, Hispanic, and Amerindian theologies in the United States, as Latin American theology, and as feminist theology, South African black theology, and various analogous theological movements in other parts of Africa, Asia, and south Pacific" (Bosch 1991:432).

According to Bosch (1991:432), theologies of liberation...evolved in protest against the inability in Western church and missionary circles, both Catholic and Protestant, to grapple with the problems of systemic injustices". In South Africa, Black theology is a

rational response to the experiences of Blacks under oppression. It asks questions as to what the Bible and God are saying about the situation of oppression. It is thus, "more political than cultural in its approach" (Kekana 1988:7). Other questions raised by Black Theology include the following: Why did God create me Black? Why does God allow white Christian to oppress Black people, whom God also loves, simply because of their colour? What does God say and what is God willing to do about this situation of oppression?" (Maimela in Maluleke 1998:63).

Black theology is basically Marxist oriented since "it employs community efforts. It is collectively undertaken" (Kekana 1988:7). It absolves individuals from personal responsibility because it is understood that "human being is essentially social" implying that, it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness" (Marx 1963:67).

6.5.2 Some Objectives of Black Theology

Black Theology arises as an attempt to respond in an obvious and analytic manner about the how, why and possibly when, concerning the socio-political and economic disorder. These are the problems of day to day living rather than concern about eternal truths which will materialize in the unknown futures.

The study of Black Theology aims at inspiring Christians for acting on behalf of God in all oppressive situations. The study of Black Theology is therefore an obligation to every Christian. It is thus not something divorced from life. It is not a place for carelessness, indifference, idle speculations, or quibbling over nonessentials. The liberation of the oppressed from all that is dehumanising, wherever they are found, is the obligation of every Christian.

There are further reasons necessitating the study of Black Theology. These include: the oppressive human situation, the quest for liberation, the need to discern acts and the will of God in history and the need for an ideal theology

6.5.2.1 Oppressive Human Situations

The world we inherit is full of stark contrasts. The majority of people live in abject conditions; they are poor, they are refugees, they are oppressed, discriminated against and unfairly treated. This is not their own doing but the result of political relationships. As we have mentioned earlier, the introduction of capitalism may have been a blessing in some Western countries, but hardly so in South Africa. Capitalism as a socio-political ideology is in itself good, but was accompanied by land seizures, expropriations and so on. Where this was not achieved by some sort of agreement it was accomplished by a barrel of a gun.

Central to this is the whole question of poverty meaning that majority of people are entirely dependent on wages to live. Beside these there are problems of inequalities, racism and discrimination of every kind. Black Theology is committed to those problems supposed to be emanating as a consequence of human relationships. It denies the fact that God is the author of poverty in one section of humanity and of abundance in another section of humanity. This concept makes a monster out of God.

Black Theology arises from God's compassion for the oppressed, the poor, down trodden, subjected to oppressive social structures emanating from advanced forms of human selfishness. It strives to point out that human beings are creatures of God's saving concern. In the Old Testament, God revealed himself as the God of liberation and holiness. He is a caring God and not neutral and indifference to dehumanising situations.

6.5.2.2 The Quest for Liberation

The quest for liberation is deeply embedded in the soul of every creature. Man reaches out for rescue from a life-condition which he knows to be contradictory to his true nature. He longs for restoration of a freedom which will accord him the privilege of expressing his true nature. In the Old Testament, salvation means to be wide spacious to develop without hindrance and thus to be safe, sound or victorious (Purkiser, Taylor R. & Taylor W 1977:366). Black Theology argues that the same quest for liberation is

denied other sections of the society because of their race and colour.

6.5.2.3 The Need to Discern the Will of God in History

History is the sphere of God's acts. God's nature and concern are clearly manifested in His dealing with the nation of Israel. Their deliverance from Egypt and His interaction with the Israelites show His nature and His concern. However, it would appear that by its commitment Black Theology does not recognise the fact that God's will could be the same for all people in the world.

This stems from its methodology and approaches. The methodological starting-point is the insight that all theology knowingly or not is by definition always engaged for or against the oppressed. Intellectual neutrality is not possible in a historical world of exploitation and oppression.

6.5.3 Relations of Black Theology

To explore the methodology of Black Theology we need to note something about its relation to the Bible, to the Church and to Historical Theology.

6.5.3.1 Relation of Black Theology to the Bible

Orthodox Theology or historical theology has the Bible as its starting point, going on to study the Catholic tradition, that is, the faith of the early church fathers. Based on these sources the Orthodox Theology seeks to understand the word of God in the past and discern the present truths about God and about God's dealing with the human race.

These truths are supposed to be relevant and universal throughout the world. The Bible is the important textbook. In section 6.2.4 we mentioned how the Bible was conceived as an instrument of social control and social struggle. It is not our intention to repeat everything we said there. Suffice to say here that the first step of Black Theology is

“some experience of political oppression and a political action, often of a revolutionary nature, designed to liberate the oppressed” (Tingle 1992:54). The second act is critical reflection of this act in the light of selective reading of the Bible.

The same Bible, however, is said to have been an effective instrument in making indigenous people reject their own cultures in favour of the culture of the colonists. Magubane (in Mofokeng 1988:33) was emphatic when he said,

The initial act of conquest was buttressed and institutionalised by ideological activities that resulted in the African people themselves loudly admitting the cultural hegemony of their conquerors...It was necessary for Africans to be incorporated into the mental and cultural universe of their white conquerors through an ideological onslaught. Hence the presence of Christian missionaries who were armed with the Bible on the colonial oxwagon when its wheels rolled violently through the breadth and length of our continent. In the bible they had the most potent canon in the entire ideological armoury targeted at the fundamental pillars of African social structure, religion and culture.

Since the Bible was used in subjugating indigenous people, the same Bible should also be used as “a formidable weapon in the hands of the oppressed instead of just leaving it to confuse, frustrate or even destroy our people” (Mofokeng 1988:40).

Of particular interest is the emerging biblical hermeneutics in Third World theology. Goba (1979a) says that the experience of oppression by these communities had given rise to new insights about the nature of the biblical message. For many of these communities the Bible proclaimed a message of liberation. The God of the Bible has been perceived as a liberating God, one whose essential nature was to promote freedom in the world.

Thus for the Christians in the Third World the approach to biblical hermeneutics evolved out of their experience of oppression. Nevertheless, Goba (1979a) points out that this kind of reading of the Bible was not exclusively a monopoly of the Third World Christians – even Christians in the First and Second Worlds who experienced oppression reflect the same approach.

6.5.3.2 Relation of Black Theology to the Church

Although "Black theologians...are Christian believers, most of them church ministers, and that they are intensely concerned with the relevance and credibility of the gospel among Black people in South Africa" (Kritzinger 1989:102), they emphasise the painful fact that the church is as racist as the rest of society.

The condition in which the Church found itself in South Africa is such that the Church is socially in exile. It has been hijacked by the oppressors to legitimise the oppression of colonialists and inflict misery upon indigenous people. The silence of the Church in this regard sent a message that it was on the side of the oppressor than the oppressed. We have referred to cases in which Black theologians called the Church a "racist institution" or a "colonial institution" (see 1.3 above). This was because of its seemingly neutral position in the face of the struggle for liberation.

6.5.3.3 Relations of Black Theology to Orthodox Theology

Christian missionaries are often the ones associated with the universalising of the historical theology and for their role in this they are severely criticised. But by so doing Black theologians hardly realised they were giving more credit to the missionaries than criticise them.

Essentially, Black Theology is a "critique of South African Christianity" (Kritzinger 1989:77). South African Christianity has not developed beyond the concern of God to wrestle with human existential situations. As such it has not developed to be able to serve human beings in their oppressive condition. The Black church is being chastised for "its structural and theological subservience to the dominant White church in South Africa" (Kritzinger 1989:158)

The sphere of human suffering is outside its scope. Orthodox theology has conceded that it is unable to realize the Kingdom of God on earth, and that this demands divine intervention. The realization of the Kingdom of God on earth awaits the Second Coming of Jesus Christ on earth, when both the living and the dead shall be judged

accordingly. Meanwhile, orthodox theology is concerned with the true faith and true living. As far as felt problems arising from the human situation are concerned, orthodox theology has little to offer.

Worst of all, is the fact that orthodox theology has been hijacked to legitimise conditions of human oppression by another human. In South Africa, *Apartheid*⁹⁶ was more of a theology than of political theory or ideology. Black Theology realizes its calling to realize the Kingdom of God on earth through fighting against oppressive structures.

Blood pressures often rise when Black theologians reflect on some hot-spots of the missionary theology and these include: conversion, indigenous culture, indigenous theology, alienation of land and political subjugation. These are but a few of the many subjects deeply "hurting" Black theologians. Having mentioned some of these it is now necessary to analyse them more carefully.

A. Black Theology, Historical Theology: Conversion

Black theologians feel that in preaching conversion, missionaries generally inculcated a sense of inferiority in indigenous people of South Africa. Inferring from what Black theologians say, it is apparent that missionaries regarded sin largely as cultural and not as a personal problem.

According to Biko (in Kritzinger 1989:92), they "saw their God-given calling to 'civilise' and educate the savages by imposing on them what they regarded as 'universal' religious and cultural character...Their arrogance and their monopoly on truth, beauty and moral judgement taught them to despise native customs and traditions and to seek to infuse their own new values into these societies".

In the light of the above it was indeed very costly on the part of an indigenous person to become a Christian. According to Mofokeng (1983:15; also Noko 1977:55), missionaries preached a conversion which demanded of the Black person a "total and

⁹⁶ It is not certain whether that meant *Apartheid* was part of Orthodox Theology.

unconditional break with himself and his entire world". To be Christian, indigenous persons had to renounce, so to speak, their cultural milieu in order to become Christian. Generally, becoming a Christian meant for most Africans "becoming a 'Black European'...[by] breaking with one's cultural roots and being grafted onto European culture (Noko 1977:55).

Sometimes conversion was clandestinely often encouraged by the shedding of tears in public church services and by confession and renouncing what one used to be and to do before becoming a Christian, and forsaking all of their former lifestyles; and often this meant no longer participating in the feasts of the ancestors, drinking alcohol, rescinding polygamous relationships, not consulting "witchdoctors" and so forth.

Consequently, the subject of conversion became a divisive issue among indigenous people, as Kritzinger (1989:92) observed: "This brought about an alienation of Black people from God and from one another, which led to the disintegration of Black society," and apparently, "conversion meant that a Black person had to become white and accept white values and the capitalist system as the framework of his salvation if he desired to be saved" (Mofokeng 1983:15).

However, in this process, turning one's back on culture and customs was not a spontaneous act expressed in gratitude for what an indigenous person received from the Gospel, but it was on account of missionaries demonising black culture. Therefore, "the missionaries are accused of a "demonization of black culture and of having brought about the prevailing alienation of the black man and his activity from God" (Mofokeng 1983:14).

In relation to the subject of conversion, Black Theologians also mention specific African customs in their criticism of the role of missionaries. They raise issues of dress, names, polygamy, ancestor veneration, divining, etc., considered by the Black theologians as pillars of the indigenous culture but eroded by missionaries in an attempt to europeanise indigenous people. Missionaries used western clothes to distinguish between the "civilised" and the "uncivilised" African. The former wore European clothes. Gqubule (1974:19) protests: "What was wrong with the White missionary was to force on the Black man, together with the gospel, European dress, customs and culture".

Similarly, indigenous African names were not palatable to missionaries' systems. Therefore, converts "had to acquire new names, 'Christian' names" (Pityana 1972:179) at baptism, and most of these 'Christian names' were taken from the Bible. Since then, the practice arose among indigenous people to give their children two names, one African and one European, or "biblical". This was partly an indication on the part of indigenous people that European life and culture was firmly entrenched in them.

Earlier on, we mentioned some concerns of Black theologians concerning the disapproval of missionaries of polygamous relationships and levirate marriages. Indeed, missionaries developed serious problems with some African customs including polygamy. To this effect, Esselstyn (1952:42) points out:

The problems which the missionaries faced were those of hostile heathen people, hostile because their traditional customs of forced marriage, witchcraft and worship of ancestral spirits were being interfered with.

On the part of some missionaries, the subject of continuity and discontinuity of the Gospel with the African traditional customs did not arise. As far as African culture is concerned it needs complete overhaul. It is within these contexts that Emslie (1966:46) could say:

The old fibre of tribal customs cannot go to make up the new material of African Christianity. Many of these traditional patterns are part of this sinful world, devised by unregenerate generation, at enmity with God.

However, Black theologians were not completely irrational in their criticism of the practices of some missionaries. They also affirmed many positive things done by missionaries. Some of these were enrolment of students in mission schools; others studied abroad and sent their children to study abroad in European countries.

Nonetheless, Black theologians are at the same time uncritical of everything lumped together as African traditional customs. They are often quite oblivious of the fact that, some issues of "tribal customs," which were not part of the culture, might have been employed by indigenous people themselves to reject missionaries' control. Perhaps a brief analogy might help clarify what might have happened to add some irrational practices to the already long list of African traditional customs. Suppose a missionary

would inquire of the indigenous person: "Is it within your custom to drink beer, or marry more than one wife, or to sprinkle ashes around your house at night?" Indeed the person in that situation, perhaps as a missionary informer, might avoid by simply answering, "Yes". Then the missionary would like to find out, "Why?" Then the answer comes, "Well, our forefathers used to do that, and we are supposed to do as they did!" Then the missionary would walk away establishing that as a fact about African customs. The analogy might be a weak one by comparison, but it suggests that, not all missionaries' informers could have been reliable persons.

From conditions of similar simulation above, Black theologians would have challenged some practices taken for granted up to now as belonging to African customs. To approve uncritically of everything emanating from indigenous people as authentic and therefore defensible leads to Afro-ethnocentrism. In the previous chapter, we have indicated that so much had been read into African customs to realise the Calvinistic doctrine of the fall which missionaries saw in African people (Bosch 1991); and it seems Black theologians are adding to the list..

B. Black Theology, Historical Theology: Indigenous Theology

Black theologians seem to have been a class on their own. While they did all in their power to refute historical theology they did not side with Indigenous or African Theology either. African Theology, as we shall see later, was not only suspected simply as merely an attempt to articulate historical theology in terms of African concepts but also as "a pet project of missionaries which romanticises the African past and suggests to Black people that they should go back to it" (Buthelezi 1978b:60).

But why would missionaries encourage the creation of African Theology? Was it for the purposes of the patient to apply Western medicine to the wound? This is not exactly the case. The case was an attempt by the missionaries in "diverting our attention to our glorious past so that we may not see what their left hands, as well as those of their fellow whites, are doing to us in the dehumanization of our lives in the present" (Buthelezi 1978b:60).

Therefore, African Theology at least in the view of Black theologians is a derailment of Black consciousness in an attempt to alienate it from present issues. This is especially the case if at least the works of Mbiti (1969) and Setiloane (2000) are to be taken into account. For instance, Mbiti (1969) wanted to see in African Indigenous Theology what he saw in historical theology.

His work is any attempt to create an African systematic theology using exactly the same categories of historical theology. Using the same categories of systematic theology such as the nature of God, the attributes of God, and so forth, he found in African concepts equivalent ideas that historical theology uses to describe God, man and the fall.

However, what Mbiti (1969) was not quite aware of, is that he was merely serving not as an originator but as a translator of historical theology. For this reason, Boesak (1977b:14) dismisses African Theology as not only practising the “exhumation of the corpses of tradition” but also as a theology amounting to “a white, western version of ‘African Theology’ having too much of a colonial aura clinging to it and has been used too one-sidedly in the sense of ‘response to the gospel’ in terms of traditional culture”. However, according to Tutu (1987) Black theology and African theology are “soul mates”.

C. Black Theology, Historical Theology: Alienation of Land

In chapter 4 issues of land were briefly discussed and in chapter 5 we showed how Christian missions contributed to the problem of land in South Africa and how large tracts of land were alienated and given to missionary societies and churches (Saayman 1997). Here we are merely pointing to the fact that the Church and especially missionaries are not exonerated from land issues in South Africa. This earned the Church a bad name among Black theologians who regarded it as a “capitalist institution.”

D. Political Subjugation

In chapter 5 we examined how indigenous people were colonised, urbanised and their social structure changed. What remains to be pointed out here is that Black theology, as

a political theory, is very concerned about the political subjugation of indigenous people. They described the Apartheid state as a violent institution. They abhorred the system of homelands or "Bantustans"⁹⁷ as enforcing the concept of "divide and rule" to destabilise Black solidarity (Kritzinger 1989).

They have been accused as unfaithful because they were political. For this they could answer, "What they [Apartheid State] fail to see is that we are political because we are faithful. If we were not faithful, we could turn our backs on the suffering and oppression and accept apartheid as it is today" (Wallis & Hollyday 1989:xii).

However, this is not the sentiment shared by all Black theologians. Bonganjalo Goba (1998:24-5) still sees the struggle of Black theologians as far from over and that Black theologians sadly turned their backs on the suffering and oppression of the people much too early, before achieving conditions of just society in South Africa. He complained

There is still ...the ongoing suffering of Black people. Poverty has deepened for the majority of Black South Africans, crime is rife, and violent killing of many innocent people is the order of the day. Children and women continue to be sexually abused. Every twenty-seven minutes a woman is raped in our cities. Yes, we have achieved our political freedom, but we have a long way to go to achieving our economic freedom... One of the serious challenges that we confront in the South African context is to articulate a faith that addresses the current context. Many critical theological voices are now part of the new political establishment or hold high positions within the new system. As a result, there is an absence of a critical voice to challenge the policies of the new government.

The mass exodus of some Black theologians from their clerical posts in churches to occupy "high positions within the new system" gave rise to a hot debate. Those who were formerly united in confronting Apartheid are now divided on question of the Church and the State. Those who are against the participation of the clergy in the government "feel that the church would be compromised if the clergy were part of the government. The other reason was due to the perception that politicians are liars who will promise the public anything in return for their votes" (Jafta 2001:125).

⁹⁷ Name for barren wastelands making up only 13 percent of South Africa's land; the South African government has declared these are the only places where the black majority can live permanently (Wallis & Holiday 1989).

Often various excuses are advanced for the participation of the clergy in the government (Jafta 2001), some revolving around the fact of the clergy being invited "to exercise a decisive vital role in cooperating with the government in the latter's attempt to implant democratic principles" (Jafta 2001:126); political leaders addressed church gatherings requesting prayers, and requested that "the church must be both a social critic of and a partner to the government" (Mgojo in Jafta 2001:129).

Many reasons are eloquently given for and against the participation of the clergy in the government (Jafta 2001). The mass exodus of Black theologians and other Christians to occupying "high positions" in the government, on the other hand, is reminiscent of the Apartheid era where some Afrikaner theologians helped in the inauguration the rationalisation of the Apartheid policy (Maimela 1987 and de Gruchy 1979).

Whether by doing so, in their minds Black theologians might think that they were now in strategic positions to realise the ideals of Black Theology remain to be seen. It is hoped that they too would not focus too much on what is going on within the government to the exclusion of their parish on the ground. However, it is now some time that some Black theologians have occupied strategic position in the government. However, there have been few significant changes in the condition of the poor of whom they purported to defend. In the next section, we shall look briefly at the agenda of Black Theology.

6.5.3.4 The Relation of Black Theology to Mission

Black Theology advocates full commitment to the demands of the Gospel. To know Christ is not to reflect upon him in isolation of the concrete situation, but to know Christ is to follow him to all places. Black Theology is a critique of South African Christianity. In many ways, South African Christianity has failed to bear witness to the Gospel. In most cases, South African Christianity did not respond adequately to the needs of the oppressed majority since it focussed largely on what was going on inside the Church itself.

Moreover, Black Theology is the critical reflection of Black Christians on their involvement in the black liberation struggle (Boesak 1978:76). It discourages

complacency on the part of Black Christians in the face of oppression and discrimination. Therefore, it is overtly political as it stood for a liberating mission. In this way, Black people ceased to be the object of mission and became the subject of mission. As Mofokeng (1983:13,43) puts it, "It speaks of Black people with the will and power to become subjects of their own history, of a community that has been liberated by the Spirit in order to become liberative in order to take concrete action to open up the future"

6.5.4 Preliminary Evaluation

This was not meant to be a treatise on Black Theology. Our intention was to select what we perceived to be strategic points from which to evaluate Black Theology and Black theologians in South Africa. In many ways Black Theology must be congratulated for the boldness it has shown in expressing its beliefs, and more importantly its conscious stance on the side of the poor. Its starting point has been black experience.

However, there are a few observations one should make about Black Theology and Black theologians themselves. Although it is to the credit of Black Theology that its methods are historical praxis, yet Black Theology proves to be an alien to history in general and to Church history in particular. For instance, Kritzinger (1989:238) would like to know,

Why have Black theologians done so little historical research on the development of the South African Christian dilemma? In their critique of white missionaries, in particular, they repeat certain negative generalisations without doing any historical research to confirm those statements. I am not saying that their statements on missionaries are false, but that Black theologians have a tremendous contribution to make in writing a missionary history (or church history) based on thorough research from a Black perspective. In this way they could deepen their context analysis substantially.

A study of history "from a Black perspective" on the part of Black Theologians would have brought to their attention that Orthodox Theology was not solely a product of only Western White Christians, but also of some Africans, too. Africans were much involved in what Black theologians simply dismiss as White middle class ideology.

By losing sight of this fact they deliberately alienate Africans from the contribution they made to Orthodox theology. People such as Clement, Origen and Athanasius and others played an important role in shaping the Theology which Black Theology easily credit to some Western White missionaries. After all, missionaries were not theologians. They were largely evangelist, witnessing their Christian faith in other cultures.

Excluding these fellow Africans from the contributions they made is a fatal error being nourished in the meadows of Black theologians and Black Theology. Being careless at this point, Black Theology lends itself too much to assertions, observations, sermons, stale jokes, significant cases that could have been the subject of more extensive arguments, sometimes dubious historical allusions and the loose use of words as long as the ultimate aim is justice.

This brings us to yet another observation, namely the fact that Black theologians and Black Theology have bought too much unreservedly into situationalism. This is apparent not only from the description they give of Black Theology as "situational, contextual, anthropological and liberational" (Kritzinger 1989:80), but also from their unconditional denial of the universality of truth. In so doing Black theologians and Black Theology is advancing the slogan, "the end justifies the means". In this context, carelessness is allowed in principle as long as the ultimate end is justice.

In view of what we have just said about Black Theology and history, sometimes it would have been appropriate at least to regard Orthodox Theology or Historical Theology as Ecumenical Theology rather than "Western Christian theology" or 'White Theology'.

The fact that historical theology was hijacked by the colonialists does not make it less theological even if it does not address the concerns of the Blacks in general. Black Theology itself is not Black Theology solely because it does not address the concerns of the Whites. This does not mean that historical theology is without its errors and problems. Theologies, whatever kind, are manmade products and because of sin people's minds are somehow depraved. "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror," says Paul, "then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully as I am full known" (I Cor. 13:12).

Moreover, Black Theology is further crippled by its reluctance to denounce the sins of the Black community from which Black people need to be set free⁹⁸. The call of Black Theology to Black people to self-acceptance and so to become proud of what they are is commendable. However, this is not the ideal place to do so. The Gospel is about the love of God, the problem of mankind and the salvation that God gives.

Unconditional self-acceptance indicates healthy minds. But this in the hands of Black theologians has been pushed too far in that it diminishes the need on the part of Black community to open themselves up and be confronted by the demands of the Gospel. Generally, the call to conversion is overshadowed by the call to self-acceptance (Kritzinger 1989:239).

By its commitment to the Black experience to the exclusion of others, Black theology may nourish the spirit of sectarianism and convey the concept that all problems suffered by Black people emanated only from white power structures. Starting from Black experience as its method, it would have not included only oppression but also, witchcraft, sorcery, moral issues, etc., since they form part of Black experience.

It is also worrying that some Black theologians are still rooted in the same mission churches, or the same white institutions while doing their best to discredit them. Is this for only the sake of survival or is Black theology a theology of bread (Balcomb 1998)? This does not mean that Black theology is only restricted to Black theologians as Black people.

⁹⁸ If what Bonganjalo Goba (1998:24-5) said was anything to go by, South Africa's problems have not been solved at all. He says, despite living in an exciting development in South Africa, yet "there is still ... the ongoing suffering of Black people. Poverty has deepened for the majority of Black South Africans, crime is rife, and violent killing of many innocent people is the order of the day. Children and women continue to be sexually abused. Every twenty-seven minutes a woman is raped in our cities. Yes, we have achieved our political freedom, but we have a long way to go to achieving our economic freedom... One of the serious challenges that we confront in the South African context is to articulate a faith that addresses the current context. Many critical theological voices are now part of the new political establishment or hold high positions within the new system. As a result, there is an absence of a critical voice to challenge the policies of the new government.

6.6 Church in Mission in the Wake of African Theology

6.6.1 African Theology as Dimension of Black Theology

In this section, we will simply mention in passing African Theology as an element of emerging indigenous religious trends as implied in what we have said so far. According to Kekana (1988:6), African Theology is an attempt to “de-Westernize theology, especially in South Africa⁹⁹”. It is an attempt to survey African theological roots and their developments. Some objectives of African Theology, therefore, are to de-colonise theology and transform African Christian behaviour patterns *vis-à-vis* their faith and their African-ness.

African Theology is commonly presented under the broader title of Black Theology, and Black consciousness but it is sometimes distinguished from Black Theology or Black consciousness. The latter is considered a distinct on its own in that it tries to revoke and distil some customs of the African traditional cultures. On the other hand, the former is considered contextual in that it seeks to meet the people in their immediate situation. This movement is more diverse and less overtly political than Black Theology; it can also be seen as a form of liberating theology, since it focuses on the fact that African Christians need to get away from their dependence on European thought forms and theological models.

One of the leading proponents of African Theology at the time is Gabriel Setiloane. He argues that,

When the missionaries came, they found that the *Xhosas* had a word for God: they had a concept of God, which these missionaries had not expected. Van der Kemp did not think they had this concept. Therefore he took the word *Thixo* for God, which was the word the *Xhosas* were using. Actually, they had a much more profound word than that, *Qamata* (1988:13).

The implication is that Africans did not hear or know about God for the first time only

⁹⁹ Exactly what this “de-Westernization” entails, it is not clear. However, in the context of what Setiloane (1988) says, it is the re-entry and the public practice of the ATR in African Christian Churches. Previously, as may have been indicated, indigenous Christians practised ATR secretly while pretending to be Christian.

when the missionaries came. They always had known God. The concept of God was inherent in their communities ever since Africans came into being. However, Setiloane does not explain why Africans had to worship ancestral spirits in spite of knowing God. He goes on to point how Africans understanding of God was different from that of the missionaries.

He advances a different story of creation. For the African God did not create human being, but caused them come out a hole. Furthermore *Modimo* is hardly considered a person. Consequently, "*Modimo*". This thing that made the people come forth, would never have been referred to as a 'person'. (Setiloane 1988:14).

6.6.2 African Theology as Re-Animisation of Indigenous People

6.6.2.1 Nature of Animism

Animism is the belief in the existence of spiritual beings, including the spirits of the living and the dead as well as those that have no human origin (e.g. trees, stones, mountains, rivers, etc.) Most of what has been said in chapter 5 relates to animism. We are, therefore, not planning to say everything we have said there. We are mentioning animism here as it relates to African Theology. The term animism has been supplanted by the now commonly used, African Traditional Religion.

6.6.2.2 Re-animisation of Christianity

African Theology is basically a means to include ATR in the worship of the Christian God. Setiloane (1988:22-3) narrates a short story about himself and how he had become a successful Pastor in Kroonstad after he had conducted the cleansing ceremony following the ancestral method, using a tail of a beast to sprinkle water upon all church members.

Thereafter, "The people kept on saying, 'you know, ever since *Moruti* (Reverend)

Setiloane came we feel that this church's ancestors have come alive". Consequently, he was accused, "Setiloane has brought back African heathen practices into the church! We don't know what he has done about his theology. Where did he learn all that theology?" (1988:23)

On the basis of that Setiloane (1988) concludes by appealing for the Church to grow "by taking seriously these cultural bonds and yearnings of the African soul, African members find that Western cultural mould of Christianity has few significant point of reference which they can identify with.

6.7 Summary and Evaluation

We have considered some elements of emerging indigenous religious trends. Owing to the limit imposed on this study, it was impossible to consider all of them. Perhaps, in addition to these, we could also have mentioned North American Black, Native American, feminist womanist, *mujerista*, and gay and lesbian liberation theology (Potter Engel & Thistlethwaite 1998:12).

However, elements of emerging indigenous religious trends underscore a revival of indigenous religions and cultures in the face of the new world order. The new world order led largely by Western powers is undermining the cultural and religious heritage of developing nations. Developing nations have been politically and economically marginalized. They are now rising up to seek their identity and their share. Thistlethwaite & Engel (1998:1) summarise this revival by saying:

All around the world popular movements are rising up out of the culture of silence and finding their voices. In Latin America, Asia, Africa, North America, Europe and the Pacific Rim, the spirit is moving and communities of the oppressed are forming, crying out against their suffering and the social, political, economic and religious structures that give rise to that suffering... These cries of protest are the signs not of a mass outpouring of hatred and revenge, but of a movement committed to working for liberation toward abundant life. Realizing that only justice can stop a curse, these communities have begun a new practice of Christianity, experimenting with new ways of being the church, engaging in the practice of justice, and reflecting critically on the meaning of this practice.

But elements of emerging indigenous religious trends are not only underscoring a revival of indigenous religions and cultures, they also are reforming themselves. This reform movement is the impact of Christianity itself, with its high ethical standards, its emphasis on God's holiness and love, and its concern for the value of the individual and for social justice. In this case, the change is brought about from without, and is due primarily to the stimuli of factors in the environment. The change results in the acceptance and incorporation of new ideas and practices¹⁰⁰ and the discarding of certain former ideas and practices.

In consequence there is reformation, where the emphasis is more upon the new than upon the old, and sometimes on the new as against the old. This has resulted, in the first place, in a dramatic religious housecleaning whereby indigenous religions are increasingly abolishing some of their grosser practices such as witch-hunting, headhunting, wizardry, infanticide, child betrothals, reductions in *muti* killings and polygamous marriages. Then again, it has resulted in a degree of Christianization, whereby a number of Christian values, such as equality before the law, improvement of the status of women and children, are embraced and some find expression in the Bill of Rights entrenched in the Constitution.

Perhaps we should add the fact of the growing concern for the poorest of the poor and the oppressed. Efforts are made to render unselfish service to mankind, etc. The extent to which indigenous religions have reformed is remarkable in South African societies in that African traditional medicine practitioners who used to be called "witchdoctors" are now designated as "traditional healers". There is generally a growing interest in the "utilisation of the services of the traditional healers who are indeed numerous and who apply their profession in the remotest quarters of the country" (Hammond-Tooke 1989:14).

Generally it would also seem that elements of indigenous religious trends are retrospective in their movement, that is, they are too concerned about the past that has been decimated by Western powers. But that would not be the route they would follow. By expressing the concept of Renaissance, indigenous people have accepted the fact that the world is constantly changing. Today, African Renaissance has become a

¹⁰⁰ The concept of human rights, non-sexism, non-racial, non-tribalism, non-ethnicism, the rule of the law, concern about the poor, religious tolerance, etc., are being advocated in these movements.

catchword in South Africa. This is due to changes brought about by the forces acting from both without and within.

The process is more interactive than reactive. Here indigenous religions and the environment act in turn as both stimulus and response. The interaction leads to such a radical shake-up of the foundations that the result is a restatement or repatterning of some of the major concepts of the religion. In the process, the old faith acquires a new meaning, new resilience, and new vitality. For instance, the concept of "*Botho*," is now gaining currency with the African Renaissance Movement. *Botho* is a collective noun encompassing in its scope, *inter alia*, the following virtues: humility, respect, tolerance, temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquillity, chastity, etc.

Whereas previously the emphasis often fell on the concept, "*Feta motho u tsoare khomo*," nearly meaning "Rather eschew human beings and go for cattle," now the concept "*Batho Pele*" or "People First" principle has now become the guiding policy in some government institutions. Another concept much cherished is "*Motho ke motho ka batho*," the equivalent meaning of which is "One is a human being only to the extent of being perceived as such by other human beings".

Perhaps in the centre of the African Renaissance is the *Kara Heritage Institute* of which South Africa has yet to feel the impact; but so is the Institution itself yet to feel the impact of colonialism. The Institute is a constituent member of the South African Chapter of the African Renaissance Institute (SACAR). Directors of the Institute are often invited to make presentations on the national media, especially radio and television. The Institution is primarily

"adopted to ensure, first and foremost, that the African knows himself/herself. Secondly, that we recapture, develop and propagate the Afrikan philosophy of oneness and common origins of the human family, and, thirdly, to develop programmes which: mobilise African Communities to reclaim and record their Cultural Heritage; reclaim Afrikan history and cultural heritage from antiquity to the present; develop their diverse cultures and indigenous knowledge systems; promote public awareness of the African heritage; harness the full scope of the African heritage for community development and nation-building; promote comparative heritage studies, sciences and technology; teach community development studies; teach comparative alternative medicine; and teach primary and secondary agriculture for food security and local economic development." (www.kara.)

This is an enormous project. However, in seeking to achieve these objectives, the Institute leans heavily on Egyptian sources, such as the *Book of the Dead*, to the extent that one may talk about African Renaissance, according to some objectives of this institution, as re-Egyptianization of the Africans. For instance, it is believed that “there is in every tribe and nation throughout this great land of Africa the brotherhood called, in the ancient Bantu Speech, *Bonabakulubase-Khemu*, i.e. The Brotherhood of the Higher Ones of Egypt (Khem whence "Chemistry" was an ancient name of Egypt). It was founded by a priest of Isis in the reign of Pharaoh, Cheops (Khufu) to spread the wisdom, which, comes from of old, among all races and tribes of Afrika” (www.kara.net)

Indeed, Africa needs this brotherhood and this wisdom, which could bring about the reduction of tribal conflicts on the continent. However, it is not yet clear what the nature of this wisdom is and how it will be spread “among the races and tribes of Afrika”. It is also still uncertain on what kind of ideology this brotherhood will be founded.

Generally, it is the context in which elements of emerging indigenous religions had resurfaced that poses a great challenge. These elements seem to be operating largely on the assumption that modern African life could be reversible at least to conform to that of the pre-colonised Africans to the south of Sahara.

By consistently insisting on contextualization, sight is often lost of the fact that the context in which Africans lived has also been globalised. That is not all, as elements of emerging indigenous religious trends think of humanity more in theoretical terms and less about what humanity is. The concepts they use to depict indigenous people as suffering and poor because of Western domination and oppression presuppose that if these were not present indigenous people would have been better off until today.

To understand humanity based on the presuppositions of elements of emerging indigenous religious trends produce endless confusion. Yet it could have been striking indeed how much we could learn about ourselves when we grasp the biblical thoughts about humanity.

The world has now been globalised or is rapidly becoming so, and this undoubtedly will continue for some time. Being so “radically westernised” (Thorpe 1992:28) the new

question now becomes, what does being African mean in the “radically westernised” world? Does it mean doing without education as pre-colonised Africans did south of Sahara? Does it mean going without conventional medicines as pre-colonised Africans did? Does it mean the return to tribal authority and the clan systems? In what sense is Africanness peculiarly distinct from non-Africanness? Granted that the pre-colonised Africa existed in the form of tribal system, colonialists de-tribalized Africans, and now elements of emerging indigenous religious trends are re-tribalizing Africans.

But African societies have not only been Westernised, but also integrated into and are already in Western cultural systems, if indeed this is the Western culture. The present globalized or rather “radically westernised” situation, on one hand, would seem unlikely be competent to lend itself to accommodating African traditional beliefs and trends. It has become insensitive to the past.

Globalisation has variously been defined as a “social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding” (Waters, 1996:3); or as a concept referring “both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (Robertson 1994:8).

Waters (1996:3) may be expressing the view held by many people that “in a globalized world there will be a single society and culture occupying the planet”. In the light of this, Walters’ statement needs to be modified. There will still be cultural pluralism; however, some cultures will have subsidiary roles to one emerging world culture. Today, it is apparent that globalisation is a situation whereby each culture has contributed or it is contributing; the good of each culture will be retained and enhanced, the bad be discarded and discouraged in the globalised situation. However, the Scriptural vision is a community of many races and nations under one Shepherd (Rev. 7).

With matters viewed from this angle, it is apparent that central to globalisation is devaluation of cultures in favour of a world monoculture. At best there could be no consistency in any local culture if it harbours its narrow agenda in the face of globalisation. As Griffiths (in Stott 1984:134) suggests: “We take it for granted that all cultures deserve equal respect, protection and promotion. While all cultures deserve respect, they do not all

deserve equal protection and promotion. On the contrary, how can we wish to protect and promote cultures which actively hinder development, for example, by inculcating a spirit of fatalism and apathy?"

On this note, we will conclude this chapter by stating that the renewal of cultures will eventually lead to one culture which will be compatible with all cultures of the world, and that culture is fairly represented in the Christian Bible and should be manifested in the Church in mission.

In the next chapter, we will attempt to establish whether elements of emerging indigenous religious trends offer the Church in mission an opportunity to declare its faith or recoil under the failures of its past. We will review the role of Black theology as the leading representative of the elements of emerging indigenous religious trends to establish its contribution to the current political dispensation in South Africa. Thereafter we shall investigate how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa.

CHAPTER 7

The Church in Mission: Its Missionary Imperative

7.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to establish whether elements of emerging indigenous religious trends offer the Church in mission an opportunity to declare its faith or recoil under the failures of its past. In order to ascertain this we will review the role of Black theology as the leading representative of the elements of emerging indigenous religious trends. Based on the testimony gathered we shall draw our conclusions.

7.2 Black Theology in the New Dispensation in South Africa

The previous chapter discussed Black Theology as an element of emerging indigenous religious trends. We are not planning to repeat everything we have said there. Our purpose here is to make Black Theology and Black theologians testify whether elements of emerging indigenous religious trends afforded the Church an opportunity to declare its faith or recoil under the failures of its past. This assertion admits the failures of the Church as a fact in the history of South Africa. Throughout this study the failures of the Church have implied and have not been consistently disputed. The only fact we have tried to point out though, is that the failure of the Church did not amount to the failure of God. In subsequent sections we will be able to show that the failure of the Church did not take place on its corporate level but on the level of its individual members who constitute it as the body.

Having said this we shall approach our assignment on the basis of the following themes:

7.2.1 Black Theology in the New Dispensation; 7.2.2 The Impact of Black Theology in the New Dispensation, and 7.2.3 Critical Evaluation of Black Theology.

7.2.1 Black Theology in the New Dispensation

The new dispensation in South Africa was greeted with joy after some decades of colonial rule, inter-racial strife and polarisation between races. With the dawn of the new dispensation came anticipation of a just society largely described as follows by Black theologians:

A just, egalitarian society with an equitable economic system based on the principle of equal sharing of the country's wealth. There would be a completely non-racial franchise: an open society, one man one vote, no reference to colour (Motlhabi 1994:120).

A totally united and democratic South Africa, free from all forms of oppression and exploitation. Societies in which all people participate fully in the Government of the country through the medium of one man one vote. A society in which there is an equitable distribution of wealth. An anti-racist society (Thoahlane 1976b:73).

7.2.1.1 Black Theology's Optimism about South Africa

South Africa will be "a country where Black and White will live together in peace and equality" (Noko 1977:74). In this regard Boesak (1978:81) issued a call to Black people to "make South Africa a country where both black and white may live in peace". But it was Motlhabi (1974b:126) who seem to speak prophetically by saying, "one day we will live together without masters or slaves". Similarly to Boesak (1978), Biko (1979:98) challenged Black people to march forward together in order to "bestow upon South Africa the greatest gift possible – a more humane face"

7.2.1.2 The Shape of the New South Africa

Black theologians envisaged the shape of the new South Africa which would be characterised by (a) a non-racial society in which Black people would not suffer "simply because they were Black people" (Mofokeng 1983:28); (b) a democratic society in which people shall govern (cf. Mofokeng 1987a:11); (c) a socialist society where a land would be considered "a God-given gift to the people comprising a nation

and therefore it shall be owned by all the people with the State being entrusted with its control" (BPC 1976:7); (d) an African society since, "Black theology sincerely believes that it is possible to recapture what was sacred in the African community long before white people came – solidarity, respect for life, humanity, and community" (Boesak 1977b:152), and (e) a non-sexist society in which total liberation would not be achieved without the liberation of women.

A survey of visions of Black theologians about the future of South Africa outlined above indicates their intense commitment to help bring about true humanity. They have come a long way witnessing to the misery of their people on the ground, and often had called to God about their sufferings.

Unfortunately, they sidelined the role of the Church in all these visions. This is obvious from the shop-list they made about the shape of the new South Africa already mentioned. The phrase that South Africa will be a Christian country does not feature there. However, Black theologians chose largely the political and cultural route to realise their agenda. This once more earned Black theology a name as "a political theology, grappling with actual power relationship in society" (Kritzinger 1989:194). As "a political theology," Black theology and Black theologians created many incongruities.

7.2.1.3 More Emphasis on Cultural Ideology

Black theologians emphasised Africanisation are part of the shape of the new South Africa. For instance, Professor Keet and other theologians such as Boesak (in de Gruchy 1979:166) sought to know whether politics and culture determine theology and practice, or should it be the other way round? Is the Word of God the norm, or is it culture and ideology?

It was hoped that Black Theology would offer an alternative route than the Afrikaner religion, which helped to create an Afrikaner ethnic religion (Maimela 1987). However, "Black Theology did not differ substantially from Calvinism as expressed by many Dutch Reformed Church" (de Gruchy 1979:166). Drawing similarities between Black

Theology and Afrikaner religion David Bosch (in de Gruchy 1979:166) concedes that theology should be contextual, but asks, "May it ever be exclusive"? He continues:

We have to ask in all seriousness whether the category 'people' or 'nation' may be the object of the church's concern for liberation. 'People' as cultural and ethnic entity is not a theological category and wherever it is made into such a category it cannot but lead to mutual exclusiveness which endangers the life of the church as the new community.

However, Bosch was pointing to "the real danger in any alliance between faith and ideology, Christ and culture" (de Gruchy 1979:167). Wherever this situation arises, "the Gospel becomes exclusive in a false sense, and the nature of the church as the body of Christ becomes radically distorted".

7.2.2 Impact of Black Theology in the New Dispensation

In spite of the many noble objectives that Black theology espoused and came to stand for, with some of the objectives partially achieved, it is widely felt that it has aborted its mission. Having said this it is necessary to review conditions that might have led to Black theology aborting its mission.

It would seem to be inappropriate to describe Black theology in these terms. One might rather approach the whole subject in one way or another: Firstly it would seem that the present political dispensation going on in South Africa is indifferent to the vision of a new South Africa held by Black theologians the dimensions of which are a non-racial, democratic, socialist, African and non-sexist society.

Secondly, if the shape of the new South Africa was already achieved it would be only on the level of intention or theory but not on the level or practice. Kritzinger (1995:387) cautions that:

We shall have to work harder, though, at developing courses which will or could have a distinct anti-racist effect. Racism has not disappeared with the advent of a democratically elected government of national unity; and if the experience of Europe and the USA is anything to go by, it may never disappear".

However, this does not mean that it is impossible for racism to disappear. Undoubtedly, some people from different races have transcended their racial bias and have come to appreciate the joy of living together. In the same way, we cannot suppose that when Black theologians envisaged a non-racial society it meant that everybody in South Africa would be anti-racist.

But generally, conditions of racism still exist in South Africa. It is being reinforced by the ideology of the economic strategy. In this order, racism is not merely limited to attitudes, but it is a tool to steer the economy. Business in South Africa, for instance is racially organised. Members of close corporations, partnerships and companies group themselves largely on the basis of race and colour. Therefore, attempts to dismantle racism without dismantling current economic systems are nigh impossible task. By espousing the vision of a non-racial society Black theologians seem to have confined racism largely to the level of attitudes.

The other thorny issue is poverty. Not only has racism not disappeared with the advent of a democratically elected government of national unity, poverty is still rife. Ndungane (2003:32) still remembers how Julius Nyerere, a president of Tanzania, addressed the Maryknoll Sisters in New York in 1970 saying:

Poverty is not the real problem of the modern world. For we have the knowledge and resources which could enable us to overcome poverty. The real problem, the thing which creates misery, wars and hatred among men, is the division of mankind into rich and poor

In the light of this, Ndungane (2003:32) argues that the same was true in South Africa. He pointed out so many destitute people amidst the plentiful resources in this country. When driving through northern suburbs of Johannesburg to Alexander one realises that this situation exists.

Reflecting on some developments in the new dispensation, Ndungane (2003:33) lists as one of the dangers, the lack of concern by the politicians on the part of the poor. Political parties have become exclusive and "are proud to say that they speak for different interest groups in society; but they are not always keen to speak of fairness, equity and justice for the poor"

He decries the fact that we live in a world in which our media, particularly television, reinforce the vision that money and riches should be worshipped. It is a world in which money enjoys more powerful rights than human rights. Only among the faithful communities does there seem to be any will to challenge Mammon, the god of riches. In the light of this, he asks a moot question, "What has South Africa achieved as a nation?" (2003:34). He recollects very well that

The fundamental restructuring which President Mandela asked for on the day of his release has not realized the hopes and dreams of the majority of the people of South Africa. In the years subsequent to the inauguration of the new government positive things have happened: for example, houses have been built, primary health-care clinics have been set up for poor communities, and other positive actions have been taken. Unfortunately we cannot say the same on economic front. The government's macro-economic polity, which we all hoped would bring in economic changes and, therefore, the enhancement of the quality of life for all South Africans, has not materialized. The government's drastic plan as set out in the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) document has failed to reach anywhere near its targets.

That the economic situation has not significantly changed with the advent of a democratically elected government of national unity is also reflected in Goba (1998). Mention has been made that racism is entrenched in the economic systems in South Africa. Realising this Goba (1998:24) concedes the fact by saying: "Yes, we have achieved our political freedom but we have a long way to go to achieving our economic freedom. This is the new context out of which we need to talk about the essence of the Christian faith".

Unfortunately, many critical theological voices of Black theologians are now not only part of the new political establishment but also part of "the new political elite... Many key church leaders, who were part of the liberation struggle, are part of this new elite. This does not mean that the new elite is indifferent to the suffering of the Black people on the ground. But the problem is just that poverty and oppression are no longer such a priority. Indeed attempts are made at dealing with poverty and joblessness of the African society on the ground" (Balcomb 1998:57). But as Goba (1998:27) has said:

Our new government has adopted an economic plan called "Growth, Employment and Redistribution" – a macroeconomic strategy. The aim is to create a competitive, fast growing economy. Its goal is to

provide jobs and redistribute resources among the poorest sectors of our society. What really drives this plan, however, are not moral imperatives to address the problems of the poor, but the imperative of the International Monetary Fund to increase productivity.

This loss of the “moral imperatives” to address the problems of the indigenous people on the ground would have met the critical prophetic challenge, which would engage the government. However, this would no longer apply since key religious leaders were now part of the government. Desmond Tutu recently described them as, “those who had stopped the gravy train just long enough to get on” (Balcomb 1998:56). To Balcomb (1998) this sounded like a harsh criticism. Does not every society have its political and economical elite? However, Balcomb (1998:57) points out that in the case of South Africa,

The image of gravy train became particularly appropriate “in the light of the enormous discrepancies that now exist between those who were erstwhile leaders of the liberation struggle and their erstwhile followers, the vast majority of whom still languish in the same predicament in which they found themselves during the apartheid years”

It is quite clear that the material conditions of the poor and the oppressed have not changed on the ground. Rather, it means that the situation has changed so politically and ideologically that, even if the fundamental beliefs that people had during the eighties remained the same, they have found themselves to be in completely different positions under the new dispensation. Whereas formerly Black theologians were part of the solution to South Africa’s problem, they now have become a problem needing solution; because they have now become part of the establishment supporting the status quo.

7.2.3 Critical Evaluation of Black Theology

Did not Black theology and Black theologians champion the cause of the poor and the oppressed masses during the Apartheid era in South Africa? Weren’t some Black theologians harassed and imprisoned by the forces of Apartheid? Were they not accused by the state as hypocrites? (cf. Wallis & Hollyday 1989:58). Granted that this indeed

happened to Black theologians, now the question is, "Where are they now? — in the middle" (Balcomb 1998:157); and "Where have they gone?" (Balcomb 1998:65).

These questions ring loudly since the objectives for which Black theologians supposedly to struggle for had not been achieved. It is in this context that Goba (1998:26) would say,

Our moment of truth in this new South Africa is that more Black South Africans are without jobs. Many people are starving in the midst of wealth. We see them searching for food in the garbage that is disposed of in the white suburbs. We see more and more able-bodied men waiting in our streets begging to be given menial jobs. There is a high rate of unemployment as more and more of our people are retrenched from their jobs. What does faith, biblical faith, say to this context?

The illusion in which we invested so much is that the solution to the South African problem is regime change. Regime change came, but with it nothing significantly happened worth talking about in the realm of socio-economic life. It would seem that the "miracle of South Africa" was merely a "political shift" for "what was 'in the middle' [Apartheid Regime] has shifted to 'the right' and what was on the 'the left' [Liberation movements] has shifted to 'the middle'. And while some have shifted from the right to the middle [the case of New National Party¹⁰¹] the right has generally remained where it was" (1998:157). This arrangement has virtually left the poor and the oppressed in the same condition as they had been in under Apartheid.

Without belabouring this point any further we sadly underscore what Balcomb (1998:63) has said:

What is more disturbing, however, is that the church of the poor, having lost many of its erstwhile leaders to the middle class and the government, and having been led to believe that, because we have a black government, they will be acceptable, seems to have lost its prophetic cutting edge.

Meanwhile Concerned Evangelicals who eloquently fumed against racism, poverty and oppression have, as an organisation, united with the Evangelical Fellowship of South

¹⁰¹ The Afrikaner political party that ruled during the Apartheid era

Africa from which it was separated under Apartheid to become The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA) (Balcomb 1998:157).

7.2.4 Preliminary Evaluation

South Africans looked up to the Church and the Church leaders to solve their problems during the time in which most of Black political organisations were banned. Particularly Black theologians had been on the forefront of the struggle. In many ways Black theologians stood visibly on the side of the poor as Tutu (in Wallis & Hollyday 1989:63) would testify:

For instance, the church was involved over the issue of forced population removals, particularly in Magopa, one of the villages that the government "moved". The South African Council of Churches, with a number of church leaders, was there. We went and stood with the people to try to support them at a time when they were under threat.

Through Black Theology they were able to mobilise the majority of believers to realise their faith in Christ through being involved in the struggle for justice and peace (cf. *Kairos Document* 1986; Concerned Evangelicals 1986). They were bold and used passionate language. Recalling some of the episodes of the time Tutu (in Wallis & Hollyday 1989:64) maintains

What is a remarkable feature of this time is the unity that is emerging in the churches. All of us were quite surprised at the broad spectrum that was represented at the February 29, 1988 March on Parliament. It never happened before at that level. It was remarkable.

What was particularly remarkable is that churches unanimously opposed Apartheid. The march to the parliament demonstrated this unity. Churches did not oppose Apartheid because they were anti-White, but because of the policies Apartheid stood for. Apartheid policies bred poverty and oppression on the ground. Racism was the most fundamental pillar of Apartheid. It was hoped that in the new dispensation these conditions would be changed. But the majority of South Africans still find themselves in the conditions they had been in during the Apartheid era.

The question arises as to what lessons could we as the Church learn about the South African situation. It would appear that to some, South Africa is a rainbow nation, but for those who are lining the streets scrambling for the leftover in white suburbs, South Africa remains a nightmare.

Black theologians would best learn from their methods that a change of situation does not amount to a change of heart. The Hebrew Prophets always pointed to the heart as the source of the problem. "The heart is deceitful above all and beyond cure," says Jeremiah, "Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve" (17:9-10).

What is even more painful to the indigenous people of South Africa is that the majority of Black theologians are leaders in the new dispensation, but the Apartheid conditions that they were arrested for and harassed for when demanding their change are still very much in evidence in the new dispensation.

What is also apparent is that some of the Black theologians would no longer align themselves with the mission of Black Theology. Balcomb (1998) seems to have been investigating and evaluating Black Theology and Black theologians. He tells of situation in which he had an interview with one of the leading architects of the *Kairos* Document to find out more about the idea of prophetic theology now that the leading architect was close to the president. The leading architect of the *Kairos* Document admitted that his perception was tempered by what he termed "inside information". Balcomb (1998:57) observed:

In other words, to put it simply, he now "knew better" than to rant and rave at the sins of the government. The possibility of this newfound information not being ideologically neutral did not seem to occur to him. Quite clearly neither the confrontational language nor posture of the prophetic theologians of the 1980s now features in the same people who used them then...

But the leading architect of the *Kairos* Document was simply expressing the majority view of the Black theologians. Most of them seem to be disillusioned by what they used to stand for.

For example, one theologian arguing for constructive engagement described those who still adopted a confrontational attitude to the state as "clinging to utopian ideals of what the state should or should not be doing, refusing to face the realities of what is politically or economically possible at a given time. Thus the use of utopianism by liberation theologians as a tool which may be used to apply constant and prophetic critique to the status quo is now looked upon contemptuously and replaced by notions of economic and political realism. Gustavo Gutierrez is out; Reinhold Niebuhr is in (Balcomb 1998:66).

Generally most Black theologians feel that, although the situation on the ground has not changed, and conditions are still the same in the new dispensation as they were Apartheid, critical prophetic engagement toward the government is no longer desirable. This is apparent from what another chief architect of the *Kairos* Document had explicitly said:

The election of South Africa's first legitimate government calls for a re-reading of Romans 13. We can no longer say that Paul's injunction to obey the government does not apply because the South African regime is illegitimate and its laws are unjust. Now we can read Romans 13 and recognise that our new government, though imperfect, is in the words of Paul "God's servant working for (our) own good". Church/State relations will have to be revised in theory and practice (in Balcomb 1998:66).

The call to reread the Romans 13 proves that Black theologians are no longer standing by what they always believed. The implication is clear, and this is the call for the type of theology that will legitimise the present government irrespective of the situation on the ground.

This complete about face by the erstwhile prophetic theologians of the *Kairos* Document is perhaps perfectly understandable and predictable. However, given the above analysis of contemporary South African society, one has seriously to ask how changed those circumstances actually are for the mass of the poor in South Africa today. If it was the poor that they were defending during the 1980s, then it is the same poor that they should be defending in the 1990s because their situation has simply not changed much at all. Quite clearly, therefore, the prophets of yesterday are not the prophets of today. But then the rulers of yesterday are not the rulers of today either. The only thing that has remained the same it would appear is the poor of yesterday, who are still the poor of today. This entire scenario must raise the question: Was the prophetic theology espoused by the *Kairos* Document truly prophetic? And if it was, why is it that it was so completely tied to the

fortunes of the political players involved that, once the main players shifted positions, it goes out the window? (Balcomb 1998:67).

This complete about face by the erstwhile prophetic theologians has largely contributed to the whole liberation struggle degenerating into racism being superseded by class consciousness.

The new situation is such that, on the top of the ladder are the “new political elite” among whose ranks are “many key church leaders, who were part of the liberation struggle” (Balcomb 1998:56); on the second rung are “the would be political elite” who did not manage to catch the gravy train, but who are still running desperately alongside it as it pulls out of the station” (1998:57); in the third place are, “the marginalised who refuse but hijack as many of the coaches as they can”; fourthly there are “the previously privileged” who increasingly feel that the country is falling apart, and fifthly, “the marginalised who accept”. These are ones whose expectations have been raised but have not been met. The lowest class “constitute the overwhelming majority of people in South Africa today” (1998:58). But they are also the ones who are easily taken advantage of by various community-based or government organisations promising to intervene in their unfortunate situation. Generally, the *modus operandi* is such that those “on the top of the ladder” would periodically devise ambitious “hollow promises” to manipulate the “overwhelming majority” to secure their vote in order to remain on the topmost rung of the ladder. Thus, they are “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Mat. 9:36).

The above has contributed further to some of the prevailing attitudes amongst the groups mentioned. Leading the field is the culture of entitlement, where theft is regarded as a form of repossession. “Take back through theft what you believe has been taken from you by theft” (Balcomb 1998:58); then is the “culture of self-pity” characteristic among some whites who feel they were victims of Black violence; then there is a “culture of corruption and mismanagement...Misuse of the government funding seems to have become endemic” in South Africa (1998:59).

This of course paints a nasty picture about South Africa in the new dispensation. We should not forget, though, that many positive things have happened. Amongst these are the electrification of the rural areas and the provision of clean water to the majority of the people. However, the whole effort on the ground is undermined by the lack of jobs,

waves of retrenchment, corruption largely on the part of civil servants, and ineffective judiciary systems.

We have explored the role of Black Theology as an element of emerging indigenous religious trends. Based on the survey we have made, we have seen the lack of commitment to the shape of the new South Africa envisaged by the Black theologians. Part of this is the about-turn Black theologians have made regarding their enterprise. We now wish to pose the question: Do elements of emerging indigenous religious trends lead the Church to declare its faith or recoil because of the failure of its past? Based on the evidence of Black Theology, it could be argued that elements of emerging indigenous religious trends afford the Church an opportunity to declare its mission. If this would be the case, then the question becomes "how"? In chapter three we said the Church should first become the Church before embarking on its mission. In chapter four we mentioned that the Church needs to realise its dimensions of its missionary mandate so that it would engage with the society. Chapter five described the problem of indigenous people in attempt to reflect the black experience, and chapter six evaluated elements of emerging indigenous religious trends. In the next section we shall attempt to examine further how the Church in mission should order its ways and practices to bear positive witness to indigenous people of South Africa.

7.3 The Role of the Christian Faith in the New Dispensation

There is unanimity that South Africa is undergoing rapid change. Africa is on the road to African Renaissance. All would seem to be keen to find their role and contribute to the African Renaissance. Many visions have emerged on the shape of South Africa, policies are being considered and methodologies and strategies have been suggested, with many others still pouring out from the press. The only unchanging situation is that of the poor, the refugees and the oppressed.

Attempts are being made to seek to determine the role and the place of Church in the new dispensation in South Africa, and many feel that in spite of the freedom achieved there is still a long way to go to achieving socio-political and economic emancipation (cf. Goba 1998; Mugambi 1998; August 2000). Poverty is as real as ever. In these

turbulent conditions, the Church as the salt and the light of the earth should make its role clear.

The relevancy of the Church in the new dispensation has been rediscovered. Karel August (2000:51) says that in the present dispensation, "the Church can be a worthy and valued catalyst for community development within the people-centred participatory development paradigm," so skilfully analysed in his article. Through the dimensions of its missionary mandate the Church is in a position of revitalising life in South Africa in general and among indigenous people in particular. However, all boil down to the question of the relevancy of the Christian faith in the new dispensation.

Mugambi's *A fresh look at Evangelism in Africa* (1998) reflects on some missiological errors of the past, points to some present challenges and suggests some strategies which could be implemented to equip the Church for culture-sensitive evangelism. Other studies investigate the subject of missiological research in the context of globalisation (e.g. Mugambi 1998: Bliese 1997). Jim Reapsome (1997:391) challenges the popular concept, "Missionary, go home", and says that it needs to be revisited. According to him, "The critical need for the 21st century will still be for visionary entrepreneurs who will search the world, working hand-in-glove with the churches, to discover ways to bring Jesus to huge assemblies of people suffering under political, religious, and economic barriers". However, be that as it may, "visionary entrepreneurs...working hand-in-glove with the churches" will need some form of evangelisation compatible with the new dispensation.

In discussing the role of the Christian faith in the new dispensation, we should do well to ask where to begin. To talk about the need for the renewal of the Church without mentioning how, does not produce anything at all. We would propose beginning at the level of an individual; an entity making up the Church. Renewal starts right there. In the next section we will endeavour to characterise the subjective life consistent with the person who knows Jesus Christ as the Saviour; second we shall look at a Christian not isolated from the world but in the world; and thirdly, we shall consider the fact of the Christian in the world but not of the world.

7.3.1 The Church in Mission and the Christian Person

Before discussing this theme, it should be borne in mind that we are dealing not only with the corporate body, the "Church," but also with entities going to make up the Church, the Christian persons. The Church, as a corporate body, can only exist and function through its members. The ideals of the Church as a corporate body concerning its mission, purpose, strategy, etc., may be attractive and somehow reasonable and perfect. But it needs to find its way through the agency of its members who are individual Christian persons.

The same applies that in the realm of Christian experience, crisis and process where the Christian confrontation of the world is expressed in the acts of the individual. Only in the joining of such individuals is the corporate act of a church to be understood. Only in this way must salvation, justification, and sanctification, and their transforming impact always be understood. They can never be connoted in a corporate sense within the biblical framework without running the danger of falling into the error of new universalistic concepts.

Herein lays both the significance and the complexity of the subjective aspect of the Church. The complexity of the subjective aspect of the Church is the credibility gap. Indeed, of all the credibility gaps that exist in contemporary life, none is more real and serious than that which exists between the ideals of the Church as a corporate body and the life and behaviour of its individual members. Generally, elements of indigenous religious trends also lose sight of the fact that individual members of the Church, individually or jointly, do not often always live up to the ideals of the Church as a corporate body.

It follows then that the ideals of the Church as a corporate body may be credible and rational, but the imperfections of its members seem to deny all that the Church as a corporate body affirms. "You are not what you claim to be," says the world to the Church as a corporate body. This is what we meant earlier by saying the failure of the Church often takes place at the level of its individual members.

Don Hooser (2007:20) puts focus on the relevance of this matter by insisting that "Members of God's Church should be striving to become like Jesus Christ, but are far

from that perfection. Each member is a “work in progress,” endeavouring to be “transformed” by God and gradually “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 12:2; 8:29).

Well, while we would go a long way in agreeing with this assertion we would diligently reserve our differences for we always have held that to be “transformed” and be “conformed to the image of His Son” is not the result of self-realization but of self-integration with God. Further or repeated endeavours to conform to God’s standards will not do.

But why is it imperative that we should consider the subjective aspect of the Church? Perhaps one reason is that missionary strategies are paying scant attention to this important factor. However, there is yet another reason – in chapter 3 we argued in the subjective realm when we said that “Before embarking on its commissioned mission activity, the church must first be the church” (Mosoma 1991:31). In saying this we implied the need for renewal of the Church.

Many concerned persons point out that the Church has lost its connection with its Head, Jesus Christ, and it has become more institutionalised, more politicised and reduced to a non-governmental organisation. In the words of Wesley Duewel (2000:20), these concerns become more apparent:

The Church of our generation is facing a greater opportunity, a greater need, and a greater challenge than the Church of any previous generation. But how largely God’s glory has departed from our churches. Just as Israel lost the glory of God’s presence (I Sam. 4:21), so *Ichabod* (“the glory has departed”) can be written over the door of many places of worship

Duewel (2000:20) further argues that our secular materialistic age loses God-consciousness. If this world seeks to be saved from the impending judgement of God and seek to escape the chaos of self-destruction, “we must be humbled before God.”

7.3.1.1 Being is Antecedent to Doing

Being is antecedent to doing. Moreover, ecclesiology has always recognised the need for the renewal of the Church and coined this expression, *ecclesia semper reformanda*. Therefore, we shall argue strongly that mission success depends on the subjective nature of the Church. It is often said that the strength of the chain depends on its weakest link. The weakest link in this case, is an individual Christian. It follows then that the subjective aspect of the Church considers the fact that what God does or has done for the Church as a corporate body can only be realised by what the Church should be or do through its individual members.

In the light of what has been said, we may have to use, interchangeably at certain points, the term, "Christian" and "Church" This is so that we may limit some language problems. Accordingly, we shall assume that what we may say of the particular Christian individual is just as true of the composite of particular individuals – the Christians who go to make up the Church. We shall lay special stress on the term "Christian".

7.3.1.2 The Christian Person: Vital Connection with Jesus

Indicatively, we are speaking firstly, of a person who *possesses an inner knowledge* of having been saved from sin by the redemptive grace of Jesus Christ of having been delivered from the penalties of sin and the terrors of hell, and of a person who, having faced the issue of an inner carnal self, knows the cleansing, empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life. Both cleansing and empowering are essential for mission, and therefore the significance of the subjective aspect of the Church.

This *inner knowledge* indicatively possessed by a Christian is as a result of the ministry and the work of the Holy Spirit who, from a Wesleyan point of view, initiated the process toward transformation through the regeneration and sanctification. The Holy Spirit operates subjectively in the life of the individual, nevertheless, objectively in the Scriptures. According to Purkiser (1978:290), the Scriptures amplify the view that:

The instant we exercise saving faith in Christ we are *justified* – pardoned from our sins, released from the penalty of death, and accepted into the favour of God; *regenerated* – re-created by the power of the Holy Spirit in the image of God and given a distinctly spiritual life, capable of faith, love, and obedience; *adopted* – received back into the family of God with all the privileges and blessings pertaining thereto (italics not mine.)

Justification¹⁰², regeneration¹⁰³ and adoption¹⁰⁴ are important factors toward the process of transformation. All three are God's work for the individual and in the individual and all result in a state of peace with God (Rom. 5:1) and goodwill toward all people (Heb. 12:14). Essentially we are arguing that the transformation of the Church begins with the transformation of its individual members and that the transformation of the world begins with the transformation of the Church.

If we were to go by what has been said in Purkiser (1978), the Church is the organization of the Christian activists who are justified, regenerated and adopted into being children of God, and moreover, who are sanctified for mission. It is indeed in the context of mission that the Church is sanctified. Jesus said, "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be sanctified" (Joh. 17:15-19).

It follows then that although the Holy Spirit is notably initiating the process toward transformation, he is at the same time the agent and the catalyst in the same transformation. Christians experience Spiritual transformation at the time when they become aware of and realise their state of the carnality and recognise that they cannot help themselves in their own strength, and that they need divine power of the Holy Spirit to cleanse them (Rom. 7:24).

During this period people as individuals may develop the Scriptural view of humanity and may realise they that live and perform below their capacity and cannot actualise

¹⁰² God's judicial act in which he freely pardons the sinner and sets the sinner free from the penalties of sin and makes the sinner righteous.

¹⁰³ The act of God whereby the sinner is being imparted the divine life

¹⁰⁴ The act of God through which he regards the sinner as a member of his divine family.

their spiritual and moral potentials and may soon cry like Paul, "Who will save me from this body of death" (Rom. 7:24).

Through the work of the Holy Spirit individuals also become aware that life should be lived in the community of love, justice and mutual care. They may feel that they need to love and be loved; to care and be cared for. But at the same time they realise that they are members of a human race characterised by misery, injustice, cruelty, oppression and indifference. In theological terms, they realise that they are members of a depraved community (Rom. 1:18-32). This gives rise to respond to the call of God to the ministry. For instance, it was after Isaiah had been cleansed that he experienced God's call. "Whom shall we send?" In essence we are saying God's call to mission is personal, but at the jointure of those called persons the Church is called. In the same way, it is when the Church experiences this cleansing that it will respond to God's call.

It all starts with the awakening of the Spirit of God in the life of an individual. Don Hooser (2007:21) raises a significant question when he asks, "How does one become a member" of the Church. In reply, though being disputed (cf. Hoeksema 1966¹⁰⁵), he says:

Surprisingly, an individual cannot "join" the Church on his or her own. First, God must *call or draw* you to Christ (Joh. 6:44-45). Then you become a member of God's Church when "the Spirit of God dwells in you," as Paul put it. He explains that "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Rom. 8:9). For as many as are led by the Spirit of God these are sons of God" (Rom. 8:14) (*italics not mine.*)

Evangelicals use several methods to stimulate a period of awakening in an individual. Hearing the preaching of the Gospel or a testimony from a friend may usher one into the period of awakening. Awakening leads to transformation. Conversely, there can be no transformation without awakening. Transformed individuals become Christian activists within the Church and they live their lives in the world in a creative tension.

It is unfortunate that religious institutions often leave the assumption among their constituents that membership of the church is all that is necessary for spiritual fulfilment and involvement in mission. Some rely upon their church membership for salvation.

¹⁰⁵ Hoeksema insists that individuals have first to be regenerated and thereafter experience God's call.

They have thus relinquished all personal responsibility for their relationship with God. With individuals under consideration Christ's mission is often aborted.

Perhaps a case in point is that of Tokunboh Adeyemo (1997), who accurately drew from Rwandese 1994 genocide some important lessons for the Church in Africa today. Prior to genocide, the Christian Church in Rwanda claimed 85 percent of the population of 8.2 million as members. Here we see the Church thriving as a corporate body, and all seemed a mission success. Beside that, prior to the genocide many other commendable things were said to have happened in Rwanda, among these is the recognition of Rwanda as the birthplace of revival in East Africa about five decades earlier and the site of large evangelistic crusades with record conversions between 1991 and 1993.

However, the massacre of 1994 left 1 million people dead, and 2 million Rwandese living as refugees in Zaire, Tanzania, Burundi, Cameroon, and Kenya. This left many people bewildered and bitter. The question asked by everyone has been what went wrong in a population of which 85 percent were Christians? But for Adeyemo (1997:430), answers were not far, and one is that "Quantity must be matched by quality". This says much which we cannot explicate in a study of this nature. He elaborated further by saying:

Numbers are not enough. Conversion must include the fruit of repentance (Luke 3:8). Christ did not commission the church to make converts but to make disciples who would observe his ways and teachings (Mat. 28:19-20).

How accurate this is! The fruit of repentance is transformation. Reliance upon church membership for salvation often drives converts under the authority of the Church and away from a relationship with God. This is the very problem in the way for the renewal of the Church.

Mission in this sense simply means persuading people to accept the church's authority over their lives without insistence upon their individual transformation. In the process they may naturally and corporately have to renounce their former life (*abrenuntiatio diaboli*) and confess the faith (*confession fidei*). However, no one is concerned about how genuine this change is (Bosch *et al.* 1980). They have thus relinquished all personal responsibility for their relationship with God.

In contrast to this, new converts need the life sustaining fellowship of a loving congregation where there is instruction, inspiration, and support which would result in transformation at the personal level.

However, Adeyemo (1997) himself should have borne in mind that indigenous people come to Christ with mixed motives but owing, *inter alia*, to their economic disadvantage, do not always do so out of the sense of sin in their lives or the need to have a relationship with God, but rather out of the sense of physical need. Evangelists must ever be conscious and take into account the context in which they are preaching the Gospel.

Poverty and other similar conditions have often driven people to accept the authority of the Church rather than the Lordship of Christ. They may also acquiesce to be members of the Church without having undergone transformation. This is the very last thing that any missionary or evangelist in the world would have liked to hear. Knowing this, however, would have greatly helped evangelists not to stop too soon when people confessed Christ as the Lord and Saviour and had been counted as dedicated members of the Church before they are transformed. It would have also opened opportunities for evangelists to engage converts further in personal relationship with Jesus Christ through discipleship.

In short we are simply saying that Church growth must be accompanied by discipleship. Without discipleship the Church will continually be immature, subject to manipulation. It is for this reason that Matthew devoted his Gospel to the subject of discipleship. Discipleship is a vital mark of the Christian believer (Beker 1994). Therefore the disciples of Christ are commissioned to make disciples of all nations (Mat. 28:19-20). Beker (1994:83-4) is most relevant when arguing that "Discipleship is not only applicable to the contemporary companions of Jesus' ministry but to all believers in general," and that the "true hearing is measured by the praxis of the disciples".

For the same reason they may not be called Rabbi, "for you have one teacher, and you are all students" (Mat. 23:8). Discipleship is not only a mark of a Christian believer, but also a permanent status of Christians. It is against the failure of discipleship that John Wesley warned his followers against saving souls they did not have time to nurture. He would be not excited about the kind of hit-and-run personal or mass evangelism and

count that as the great revival unless there would be a follow-through of nurturing (cf. Parrott 1978).

When admitting the fact that all these are happening then the question that would be too risky to attempt to answer is, "why?" Fingers may point to all directions, but coupled with what we have just said about discipleship the problem is compounded further by at least two factors: one, for lack of better words, from the top side and another from the bottom side. From the top end evangelism has never been priority number one since it was seldom accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. Where it was, without the Holy Spirit, it was often only a pretext for some ulterior motives. Perhaps Bedwell (1953:101) put the finger on the crux of the problem by saying:

Conditions arise largely through a failure to preach the gospel to the masses in the power of the Spirit. This failure is partly due to the very large burdens which fall upon a missionary in caring for the native church. Evangelization of heathen districts has been crushed out of many a missionary's life. His time is fully occupied in administering the affairs of the society to which he belongs. Institutions, schools, farms, business – all legitimate and necessary on the mission field – may become the grave of our evangelistic fervour and blind us to the greater need, unless we watch. Our primary task in this age is to "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Missionaries are too busy to evangelise, preoccupied by administrative concerns rather than saving souls. This may be decried as the lost opportunity. Africa had always been ready for a mighty spiritual awakening no less than now. Unfortunately people with the know-how lost the opportunity by preaching superficial gospel that did not penetrate into the heart of an African. After many years of missionary toil, Africa is in the same spiritual condition that it has always occupied before being evangelised. Africa is civilised and westernised but Africa needs re-evangelisation.

However, from the bottom end we should always bear in mind that Christianity did not arrive in Africa to be deposited into *tabula rasa*. Most indigenous people are converts from ATR. Religious education is acquired intuitively or simply caught rather than taught. Religion is always given, and is not something one consciously enjoins. It does not need a conscious exercise of the mind to be a member of ATR. Membership of ATR is simply universal and unconditional. One is simply borne into it. This attitude has a

great impact upon indigenous converts since they would passively regard themselves as members of the Christian Church in the same way as being members of ATR.

Therefore, to raise consciousness of comprehensive Church membership is still a long journey an African has to travel. Christianity, however, demands radical conscious acceptance, and membership is conditional to the price of discipleship. To that end, Jesus talks about the need to carry the cross and follow him; the need to hate one's own life and follow him. There has to be a conscious action (Luk. 14:25ff).

7.3.2 The Church in Mission and the Christian in the World

Not only are we indicatively talking about a person who possesses an *inner knowledge* of having been justified, regenerated, and sanctified, but we are also talking about a person who is able to say what God is doing to save a person. We are in fact talking about a person who is part of the Church, and now faces the world and no longer wishes to conform to the world but ardently seeks to be a relevant witness of the regenerating grace of God.

A Christian may not simply be confused with a good citizen of the world and a law abiding, moral somebody. It is not all to this end that the Christian has been saved. Both good citizenship and being law abiding are praiseworthy and should be commended always. However, Christians do more than that. They are mediating the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, and are therefore always pleading, "May thy Kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mat. 6:9).

They recognise the kingdoms of the worlds while anticipating the Kingdom of God, where God's reigns supreme. This is what Shelley (1982:94) implies by saying, "The Church always stands in a dual relationship to human affairs. Jesus summarized the role best when he spoke of his disciples – "not for the world" but "sent into the world" (Joh. 17:16,18)" Therefore Christians must always observe their involvement and yet detachment from the world.

Since we are talking about the Christian in the world, something needs be said here, and that is that the word, "world" is used, in various senses. On one hand it connotes a

physical entity, as in Acts 17:24, "God that made the world and all things therein." Or the word gives a sense of the whole human race, as in John 3:16, "God so loved the world."

However, we have a third concept or meaning as expressed in one of the definitions of *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*: "The customs, practices, of man as social beings" and a great deal of these "customs, practices, of man as social beings" are informed by the spirit which is at enmity with God which is variously called "sinful nature" (Rom. 8:5) or "flesh" (Gal. 5:19), etc. Could this perhaps be what was entailed in the Johannine injunction, "Love not the world" (I Joh. 2:15)?

In our theme at least this is what we have in mind as the object of the Christian's involvement. Several questions suggest themselves in regard to the subject of involvement with the world, amongst which are the following: At what level should this involvement take place? By what means should Christians exert their involvement with the world? In Chapter 4 we explored the dimensions of the missionary mandate as points of social involvement, but two more factors seem to suggest themselves, namely Christian witness and Christian action. In the next section we shall have more to say about this, but first we need to recap what we have said so far.

7.3.3 Preliminary Evaluation

In the previous section we have noted that the Church in South Africa does not exist as a distinct group or as an "alternative community". As its members are interspersed among the masses like salt all over the substance it flavours. In our evaluation of the role of the Church in the present dispensation it was therefore critical that we should consider the role of Christian individuals as members constituting the Church as the Body of Christ.

It is our argument that if the Church is to bear positive witness to the indigenous people of South Africa, the missionary role of the individual Christian needs to be rediscovered and mobilised. Very often in missiological circles emphasis has been placed upon the role of the Church in the world as a corporate body, unfortunately to the neglect of the

mission of the individual Christian within the mission of the Church. Howard Hamlin (1960:38) argues in this respect by saying:

The base of the evangelistic pyramid is the consecrated, activated individual. Every sanctified life should be like a stone dropped into a quiet millpond; the concentric circles of radiated gospel message should stir the area in which he is the centre until the placid conscience of those in his immediate environment is agitated and stirred by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit through the medium of an effective, personal Christian witness.

It is within this context that we have indicated that the Church as a corporate body does exist and function through its transformed or sanctified members. These individual members embody and model the ideals of the Church. However, we also mentioned the fact of the credibility gap, which often exists between the Church as a corporate body and its individual members. This often happens when individual members fail to live up to the ideals of the Church.

We should remind ourselves that very often Jesus spoke of the prize of discipleship in terms of the committed individual when he said,

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple (Luk. 14:25-27).

Individual sanctified Christians are the ones always on the cutting edge. It is also within this context that Paul so often talks about spiritual gifts aiming at equipping members of the Church to build up the Body of Christ. But it is Dunn *et al* (1981:111) who specifically clarified the point by saying:

Every individual believer will need to accept God's call to be His witness. Each member, then, must acquire the tools to be an effective witness. Included in the tools are: a working knowledge of the Word of God, a value system based on Christian principles, a life-style congruent with the Bible, and an acceptance of the call to be a witness. The church will need to provide educational opportunities and challenges to members to help them acquire the necessary tools. Although all are to be witnesses, some will have special gifts of evangelism. Every local church should help individuals identify their gifts, and those with gifts of evangelism should be encouraged by

training programs, by evangelism team efforts, by prayer support, and money support, to carry out the evangelism mandate.

Based on what we have said about the role of the individual Christian in mission, in the next section we shall point out that the essence of the success of mission is borne by the sanctified individuals through Christian witness. We shall also attempt to identify various forms of Christian witnessing.

7.4 Christian Witness: Means of Social Involvement

Our subject is a Christian in the world. We have said that we might at certain points have to use interchangeably term "Christian" and "Church" The same is implied in Christian witnessing. Christian witness is a primary means and perhaps the very method of involvement with the world.

Christians are mediating the coming of the Kingdom of God to the world through Christian witnessing as the basic means. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you," Jesus said, "and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Nevertheless, Spiritual power must first be received. Witnessing then is the consequence of having received this power. It takes divine power to transform the world and not human skill. Humanities try their level best, and that is excellent. However, to transform the world is far from being within the cerebral contents of angels and human beings.

Talking about Christian witness today connotes boldness to stand against oppressive regimes or powers of the world, involvement in peoples struggles for justice, staging sit-ins, consumer boycotts, participating in mass action or even supporting violent means to precipitate the dispensation of a just societies, etc. These were necessary to those who have advocated them and are indefinitely continuing to do so; but during the course of this study, it will be clear that these actions are not what we imply by Christian witness.

It is our view Christianity is a revolutionising faith relying more not on revolution but in revelation. We shall talk about some revolution in subsequent sections of this study. But the purpose of the Church

is to make the fact that Jesus Christ is present in the world tangible, real, visible, and effective. The people who do not know Jesus are to come to know him in the presence, the proclamation, and the persuading acts and words of the Church. God's missionary Church witnesses to the fact that Jesus is alive and that he is the Head of the body, the Church through loving *koinonia* fellowship, through confession that Jesus is the Lord, and through action of diaconal service (van Engen 1991:97)

In the meantime, it is important to remember that in mediating the coming of the Kingdom of God to the world, Christians are not to create it but to receive it. The view, therefore, that "Jesus was radical always geared to turning the world upside down" (*Concerned Evangelical* 1986:8) lacks not only content but is also not be compatible within the context of this study. Christianity believes not in deforming the world to transform it, but rather, in informing the world to transform it. Revolution deforms, revelation informs. The Gospel is the power of God to transform the world (Rom. 1:16-17).

With this in mind we now wish to review some methods of witnessing suggested by Taylor (1964) alleging to be the same used by the disciples of Jesus Christ. Our purpose is to discover the extent of their involvement with the world. Taylor (1964) summarises these methods as follows: miracle-centred witnessing, divinely guided witnessing, witnessing through personal visitation, experience-centred witnessing, scripture-centred Witnessing

7.4.1 The Church in Mission: Miracle-centred Witnessing

It is interesting to note that Taylor (1964:60-1) links the performance of miracles in the New Testament with the spreading of the Gospel. Miracles in the New Testament were not performed as miracles for their own sake. They were performed not as an end in themselves but provide the disciples of Jesus with many opportunities to declare the Gospel to the masses. This does not mean that performing miracles is of secondary importance to the Gospel. The Gospel is in itself a miracle. Jesus was born by the Virgin Mary; believers are born of the Spirit; Jesus Christ rose from the dead; etc. We are only disputing the fact that performing miracles, as indicated in Taylor (1964),

cannot be done in isolation from the proclaiming of the Gospel, and therefore, the heading under consideration, miracle-centred-witnessing.

Several Scriptures would lend their support to this line of thinking. For instance, the opportunity of the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate (Acts 3:1-11) was used by Peter and John to declare, "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this" (Acts 3:12-14; NIV.). Eventually, "many who heard the message believed and the number of men grew to about five thousand" (Acts 4:4). Therefore, miracles were not just performed for their own sake, or for the sake of the recipient, but were creating yet other opportunities for the Gospel.

Consider yet another episode, "As Peter travelled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years. "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and tidy up your mat. Immediately Aeneas got up. All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord" (Acts 9:32-35). We also find a similar pattern in Acts 9:36-42 where a miracle is performed and many turned their hearts to Jesus Christ.

"Miracles" are still being performed today in the name of Jesus. One only has got to watch television by means of a satellite dish to see the prevalence of the miracles performed there. However, those who are performing them preach about the Messenger but not about His message, and much less about the rest of the Bible. They have little or no interest in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, where they preach it serves as a pretext to advance the goal of their own miracle crusades if not proving their godliness or their supernatural powers. However, the New Testament miracles not only served to afford Christ's disciples an ample opportunity to declare the Gospel but also to provide witness to us why people believed in the Lord.

7.4.2 The Church in Mission: Divinely Guided Witnessing

Philip was commissioned by the Holy Spirit to meet the Ethiopian eunuch in the countryside (Acts 8:26-39). The discussion ensued which let the eunuch declare, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. ... Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptised him" (8:38). The same Spirit commanded Peter to go to the house of Cornelius to speak the message of Jesus Christ there, and "while Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message" (Acts 10:44ff).

Paul occasionally experienced divine guided witnessing. Paul and Barnabas were sent off through instructions of the Holy Spirit given to the Church. "While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2). In the course of his missionary journey, he was forbidden by the Spirit of the Lord to enter Bithynia. During the night he saw a vision whereby a man of Macedonia pleaded with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:7,9). The Holy Spirit was actively involved in the witness ministry of the Church and wherever they went he was with them, guiding them and encouraging them and even protecting them.

7.4.3 Church in Mission: Witnessing through Visitation

In the absence of divine guided witnessing, or miracle centred witnessing, the disciples developed a programme of house-to-house visitation. "Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 5:42; NIV.) No wonder that they were accused; "You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood" (Acts 5:26); and later, "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here" (Acts 17:6). But that is not all, "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8:4). The ministry of the word was central to the apostles to the extent that they strictly confined themselves to it, saying: "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order

to wait on tables” (Acts 6:2). Many similar examples could be cited in through Scriptures.

Mark Nysewander (2000:29-30) gives an amazing account of house meetings. He says:

A little more than a month after Jesus left the few, three thousand people were added to the Church. These one hundred and twenty got busy and started aiming for a few taken from the three thousand. They met in homes with a few and then gathered at large events for worship and teaching. In Jerusalem the Church meeting in homes continued to grow. It reached between 10,000 and 15,000. After 250 AD the number of believers exploded into the millions. Growing at this rate, in three hundred more years Christianity would have spread from Turkey to the end of the earth. But it began to slow down and stall out in growth. What happened? Up to 300 AD archaeologists can find no evidence of church buildings. All they can find are houses with Christian drawings on the wall...After 300 AD the evidence of church buildings starts showing up. Events became the primary gathering of the Church. The momentum of conversion slowed down as the Church opted out of making disciples for spectator Christianity

Today we can talk about centrifugal and centripetal missions whereby the former would include visitation programmes and the latter would simply draw the people through events in the Church. Without discounting the use of church building, Yun (in Nyswander 2000:13-14) declared:

When I am in the West I see all the mighty church buildings and all the expensive equipment, plush carpets and state-of-the-art sound systems, I can assure the Western church with absolute certainty that you don't need any more church buildings. Church buildings will never bring the revival you seek. The pursuit of more possessions will never bring revival

7.4.4 Church in Mission: Experience-centred Witnessing

We said that a Christian person is able to tell what God has done in transforming failures of life through regeneration and sanctification and that Christians can tell what their lives used to be like before they came to Jesus and how they had changed from the moment they knew and had received Jesus Christ as the Lord and the Saviour of their lives. But none among these who so profoundly used this method did so more than Saul of Tarsus who later was later renamed Paul. He frequently used the Damascus

experience with Jesus to build up the overwhelming weight of evidence that drove even King Agrippa to declare, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts: 26:28; also 21:28-40; 22:1-21). Paul was also speaking in the realm of Christian experience when said to the Philippians (3:4-9):

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalist righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that come from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

In the realm of the living, it is hard to keep silent about personal experiences, how much more so if the Holy Spirit motivates people to share their experiences? The disciples were bold to declare in the face of the court, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:18-20). In other words, we cannot keep silent about what we have experienced. Carter and Earle (1959) say that the message was burning in their heart as with the prophet Jeremiah (20:9). Then they go on to say:

Courage born of confidence is the most disarming weapon known to man. Here there was no anticipation of objection met by subtle argument of logic. Rather, the apostles believed so certainly and witnessed so definitely that their faith became contagious, even in testimony to the unbelieving Sanhedrin (1959:60).

Christians do witness with certainty because it is grounded in their experience. Some have underestimated experience as merely existential, grounding religion in the realm of some psychological domain (cf. Wynkoop 1972). To these religious experience is "intolerable because it appears wholly subjective and undependable and negates the objective aspect of the grace of God" (1972:350). This is, however, some poor generalizations. How everything subjective does translate into negation of the objective grace of God?

But God's salvation is more comprehensible in that "we are not simply saved 'on the books' but also 'in our heart' and not only in the 'heart' but in the whole of life to which the 'heart' refers," claims Wynkoop (1972:350). Perhaps it is Howell Harris (in Mavis 1969:147) who expressed this mystical element in his experience of Christian assurance in these words:

On June 18, 1735 in secret prayer, I felt suddenly my heart melting within me like wax before the fire with love to God my Saviour; and also felt not only love, peace, etc, but longing to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; then was a cry in my inmost soul, which I was totally unacquainted with before, "Abba, Father." I could not help calling God my Father; I knew I was His Child, and that He loved me, and heard me. My soul being filled and satiated, crying "Tis enough, I am satisfied. Give me strength, and I will follow thee through fire and water

Or, consider Thomas Rutherford (in Mavis 1969:147) who looked at his experience of assurance rather more critically and sought to analyse it, saying.

What I then received...so far as I can express it, was as follows: I heard no outward voice; I saw no external light or vision of any kind; there was no text of Scripture brought to my mind; neither did I feel any extraordinary joy; but in an instant, I received a conviction or evidence in my soul, whereby I was assured in that moment, that all my sins were forgiven for Christ's sake, and that I was accepted of God in the beloved; that conviction as well as the assurance which accompanied it, was not produced in the way of reasoning or argument; it was not inferred from anything I had felt on former occasions-no, nor from anything I felt the moment before I received it; it was direct, immediate, and also clear and unequivocal; it was the silent but powerful voice of God, speaking directly to my heart, telling the great things that he had done for me, and pointing me to the place when, and where he did them.

Amongst other methods of witnessing, experience-centred-witnessing is the primary one. For this reason Jesus Christ commissioned his disciples equipped only with experience, without a document to go on change the world. Today the Church needs bibles, tents, religious tracts, convenient church buildings, musical instruments, discipleship material, etc., to carry across the same message the disciple did without the use of those things.

7.4.5 Church in Mission: Scripture-centred Witnessing

Taylor (1964:53) contends that “the witnessing that brought the greatest harvest was on the Day of Pentecost”. On that day Peter delivered a message taking it from Joel 2:28ff and moved about 3,000 people to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41). Stephen penetrated the hearts of his accusers by skilfully citing the events of the Old Testament and eventually drove the point home with these words:

You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him – you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it (Acts 7:51-53).

Although he was subsequently killed on account of his message the memory of his words endured for long time, at least with Paul. He could recall that he was there when Stephen was murdered.

The Gospel writers also relied heavily on the Old Testament Scriptures for the interpretation of the events surrounding the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ. Matthew linked some events with the prophecies. He linked the birth of Jesus with the prophecies of the Old Testament (Mat. 1:21); the massacre of Herod (2:17-18); the ministry of John (3:2-3), etc. Jesus himself resorted to the Old Testament to refute the tricks of the Devil (Mat. 4:1-10). John assumed Scriptures to be the basis of faith when he said, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ; the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:31).

Unfortunately the Bible has never received the recognition it deserves among some indigenous people, not to mention it to elements of emerging indigenous religious trends. At best it is only a Sunday book, and not a daily bread. It is most feared by the public since its message has the potential to pre-empt future ideals which inform modernity. It is thus a book to be avoided. Both Peter and Paul respectively held the Scriptures in high esteem when they said; “No prophecy came as a result of men but men wrote as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit” (II Peter 3:21). “For the Scriptures are capable of instructing, that the man of God will be perfect in every way” (II Tim. 3:16-17).

7.4.6 Preliminary Evaluation

In concluding this section we would like to demonstrate, by way of illustration, the power of transforming lives through Christian witness, and we shall select as representative experience-centred witnessing. Let us suppose we were present on the day that Jesus and his disciples crossed the lake to the region of the Gerasenes (Mar. 5); and we were present when Jesus got out of the boat and a man with an evil spirit came from the tomb to meet him.

This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained, hand and foot but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

But when he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice. "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me! For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!" After the evil spirit had come out of him the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. "As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, 'Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you'. So the man went away [simply armed with the story] and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed".

Perhaps we were also fortunate to hear the story of this man as he spoke for himself saying: "You all perhaps know or heard about me. I am a man used to live in the tombs, and no one could bind me any more, not even with a chain. For I had often been chained hand and foot, but tore the chains apart and broke the irons on my feet. No one was strong enough to subdue me. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills I would cry out and cut myself with stones".

Perhaps he would even add, "As an account of this I lost my family, my wife and my children, and have lost all my possessions on account of my sickness. Many people came my way and have tried to help me by various means and no one could. But Jesus

was merciful to me and delivered me of the evil spirit". This is the story not only worth listening to as it tremendous implications for who Jesus Christ is.

The man above narrates the story of his personal life. He accounts for what had happened to him that today he was healed. The impact of the story is between what he had been and what he is now. The hearers of the story could have one way or another relate with him when they share in the experience of this man.

Christian witnessing is an effective means of engagement with the world. Personal witnessing, on the other hand, is advantageous in that one is able to tell ones story face to face. Life changes life. Imparting good information alone cannot transform life. Perhaps, that is why God did not send not effective information to change the lives of the people, but rather sent his Son to change lives on earth. He came as a person and interacted with people on earth.

Moreover, if indigenous people of South Africa are to be reached by the message of the Gospel, experience-centred witnessing should also strongly be considered. Above all, it will take more than the efforts of those who are traditionally labelled ministers, missionaries, and evangelists to reach the masses with the life-changing message.

It would require the total mobilisation of all believers in the spreading of the good news. Each believer's heart is a missionary to the heart of a non-believer. This what Duewel (2000:21) implied by saying:

The Church will be ablaze for God only when you and I are ablaze for him. The Church will be as mighty for God as you and I are mighty for God. The Church will be no more Spirit-filled than you and I are Spirit-filled.

But Christian witness is not the only means of engaging the world, there is also Christian action. In the next section, we shall have more to say on Christian action as a means of involvement with the world.

7.5 Christian Action: Means Social Involvement

The preceding section, Christian Witness as a means of involvement with the world, and the present section, Christian action as a means of involvement with the world prove that Christians cannot remain indifferent to the subjective and objective needs of the world. Christians possess a different view of humanity. For Christianity, mankind is either in sin or in Christ, not in religion. Again, for the Christian the world is the sphere of God's activity and an object of God's change.

Christians have a positive view of the world. Thus the Psalmist could boldly say, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters" (24:1-2) Christians carry God's mission on the basis of optimism about the future.

In this context Christian action is a means for involvement with the world. It is a faith-based-action. It is not an end in itself, but a means to conscientize the world about the moral righteousness of God and thus to exert Christian influence upon it. We shall say something about the righteousness of God shortly. Christian action also provides both the context for the existence of the Church and the reasons for our living, and it simultaneously forms our core and circumference.

Christians are to be vigilant and conscious about the needs of the world; not only because they became awakened to them or had experienced them, but also that the Scriptures had revealed the needs of the world to them (Rom. 1:18-32). However, they should not only know about the needs of the world but also about the solution. For that reason Christians are here to deliver the message by means of the word and deeds to point the world to the Saviour of the world. In this case, Dorsey (1965:385) apply comments:

The moment the Christian Church was born, she addressed herself to the world in which she found herself and began to change that world – not into a pattern of the Church's choosing but in accordance with the Master's prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.

Christians see a world standing in need of redemption and a Christian Church strives to change the world by changing the people through regeneration and sanctification.

Regeneration and sanctification are in turn the work of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately God is the agent of change and transformation but executes these through the Church. This is the central message of the Scriptures. Hodges (1973:15) amplifies this view by saying:

The Church is God's agent on the earth – the medium through which He expresses Himself to the world. God has not other redeeming agency on the earth.

By striving to change the world, the Church realises that complacency ardently promoted by the attitudes of silence in the face of evil unwittingly encourages or supports moral chaos already overwhelming the world. Christian action is, therefore, the deepest area of Christian commitment based upon the Christian faith.

However, Christian action requires a norm and that norm is the Word of God, the Bible. This does not mean it is the duty of Christians to enforce the teachings of the Bible on to society but to testify about their authenticity. The biblical teachings are transferable and not enforceable. At best they are to be proclaimed. They address themselves to the consciences of people in order to inform their moral choices. Indeed, Scriptures envisages nothing less than a new man, a new society, a veritable new heaven and earth in which universal righteousness prevail. The Christian is to bear witness to the divine spiritual and moral dimension in work and leisure, in learning and the arts, in family and public life.

Unpacking this statement would be interesting, especially the last sections of the first sentence. "A new man" is followed by the "a new society" and finally "a veritable new heaven and earth in which universal righteousness prevails". First, there should be "a new man" who should be an agent of "a new society" culminating in "a veritable new heaven and earth". It should be borne in mind that the "universal righteousness" implied here is God's righteousness which comes by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:17) and not the result of a series of treaties signed between nations. It is a gift of God to his people, not the result of human efforts to accentuate some form of reasonable morality.

Furthermore, it should be noted that Christian action is not something incidental to the Christian faith but the very means of concretizing the same Christian faith. Accordingly, we should argue that Christians cannot approach social actions with an indifferent

attitude that not much can really be learned from them or with militant opposition as toward something which could only be utterly false or contaminating.

According to this kind of indifference or opposition, it would mean that either the truth is already embodied in the Scriptures or else, if other fields contain any truth it is not really essential to salvation – since the Scriptures contain all that is essential in this respect – so any more than a half-hearted passing nod is really too much preoccupation with the transient when we should give exclusive attendance to the eternal. Such is one of the components of the view that gave rise to evangelicals renouncing their social responsibility during the decade following World War I (cf. Stott 1984:6ff). Such a move may have been based on some reasonable ground but nonetheless it is ill advised. Therefore, Stott (1984:15) emphasises that

Instead of seeking to evade our social responsibility, we need to open our ears and listen to the voice of him who calls his people in every age to go out into the lost and lonely world (as he did), in order to live and love, to witness and serve, like him and for him. For that is “mission”. Mission is our human response to the divine commission

The Christian Church cannot alienate itself from Christian action since the Church is an organism and an organisation, spiritual body and physical entity. As an organisation it recognises its concrete aspect through which it is able to live and interact with the world in a concrete way. We shall, therefore, attempt to amplify this view further by investigating Christian and Social Transformation and Christian and Social Tension and conclude this section by suggesting some ideas on Components of Christian Action..

7.5.1 Christian and Social Transformation

Social transformation is the primary task of the Church and can be effected by Spirit transformed Christians (Duewel 2000). Fundamentally, the Church believes that society cannot transform itself (see Chapter 3, Universality of Sin). This is why the Church continues to believe and still exists. In this way, the Church is both a sign and a catalyst. As a sign it shows that societies cannot transform themselves at least from the innate culture (see Chapter 3). But the Church is a catalyst in so far that it is the agent of change and transformation.

The overriding presumption of Christianity is that modern societies, not withstanding their technological achievements and the fact that we may be living far ahead of our time, have no inherent powers to transform themselves. Modern societies still find it impossible to rid themselves from innate culture characterised, as we have seen, by acts of violent crime, oppression, racism, tribalism, exploitative trends, corruption, greed, manipulation, murder and war, which are daily making headlines in the media.

If the saving power was inherent in humanity, by now the world would have been a safe place to live in. Instead, tension between countries is rising and the world is increasingly reaching an all time volatility stages. Philosophers decry moral degeneracy, but have no way of changing things on the ground. Furthermore, how would we be sure that all those decrying moral degeneracy were also partakers of the same concern? It would seem that many people have concluded that moral degeneracy, secular and loveless communities are inevitable circumstances of their lives. But Jesus Christ anticipated his followers' ability to transform the world when he said:

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Mat. 5:13-16)

By these words Jesus meant that the Church is within the society as the salt within the substance it seeks to savour and also above the society to provide light and transforming energy. It is "a city on a hill".

This was what Shelley (1982:94) implied by saying, "The Church moves through history to a special beat: separation from the world yet penetration of the world". However, he made further observation that "Christians often differ with each other over the boundaries of withdrawal and engagement. Witness to some is compromise to others" (:94). We shall elaborate on this in the next section.

7.5.2 Christian and Social Tension

We have said one of the major tasks of the Christian walk is to be in the world while not of the world. But how does the Church negotiate and manage the relationship between self and the surrounding social order? Should the Church, perhaps in terms of Scott (1984) coerce people by influencing legislation to accept the Christian way; or adopt the *laissez-faire*? Stott (1984), himself opts for persuasion, which he says "is the way the Christian mind advocates, for it arises naturally from the biblical doctrine of God and man" (:50). He elaborates further by saying:

We should seek to educate the public conscience to know and desire the will of God. The church should seek to be the conscience of the nation. If we cannot impose God's will by legislation, neither can we convince people of it merely by biblical quotation. For both these approaches are examples of "authority from above", which people resent and resist...In evangelism we should neither try to force people to believe the gospel, nor remain silent as if we were indifferent to their response, nor rely exclusively on the dogmatic proclamation of biblical texts, but rather, like the apostle we should reason with people from both nature and Scripture, commending God's gospel to them by rational argument. In social action, similarly, we should neither try to impose Christian standards by force on an unwilling public, nor remain silent and inactive before the contemporary landslide, nor rely exclusively on the dogmatic assertion of biblical values, but rather reason with people about the benefits of Christian morality, commending God's law to them by rational arguments

Stott (1984) supports his persuasion approach by supplying a series of examples in which Christians had used this approach to reach the conscience of the people. He argues

We therefore need doctrinal apologetic in evangelism (arguing the truth of the gospel) and ethical apologetic in social action (arguing the goodness of the moral law). Apologists of both kinds are wanted urgently in today's church and world (1984:52)

But how should we negotiate a relationship between the Church and the social order? Three solutions will be attempted, and the fourth one would characterise the person who claims allegiance to the Christian way of life.

7.5.2.1 The Revolutionary Approach

This perspective on how to negotiate a relationship between the Church and the social order begins with the assumption that something is wrong with society and it needs to be changed. Many people have identified with this. The chief proponent of this approach is Karl Marx. His central doctrine is that human beings are not fully human; they are alienated and dehumanised and human history is an unfolding drama of ever-increasing alienation and dehumanisation (cf. Maimela 1989). He felt both the hurt of society's victims and anger toward the forms of economic life that prevailed and caused their pain. This approach has been fairly represented by elements of emerging indigenous religious trends, particularly Black theology.

But when the needs of others are not met, or when their value as persons seems to be ignored, how should the Church respond? The radical approach assumes that society and its institutions have used and abused the individual. In the words of Marx (in LeFevre 1977:67)

They mutilate the labourer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process

Thus the revolutionary solution sets in motion a movement for a radical solution or cure. That is, the institutions and organizations (e.g. the capitalist economic system, in the case of Marx) behind the "injustice" in social order must be changed. The only hope for justice to right the wrongs in the social order is to demand dramatic change¹⁰⁶. A sense of desperation generally prevails – a fear that time is running out.

Two approaches to the revolutionary solution, each representing evaluations of and attitudes toward the personhood of others, are the need for power and the approach of stratification.

¹⁰⁶ Maimela (1987:28) says, "Although Marx believed that capitalism is historically destined to collapse under the weight of the inner contradictions that it generates, he believed that only a communist revolution could usher in the new order of things. In other words, only a complete transformation of the capitalist economic system through the agency of the working class would result in the creation of the new human being and new social order".

A. The Need for Power

The use (and abuse of power) to change the social order is a common thread in history. Stott (1984) outlines several illustrations on the use and abuse of power to change social order or perceptions. Top of the list is the Inquisition in Europe, which was a special tribunal set instituted by the Roman Catholic Church in the thirteenth century to combat heresy. The legal ban on the manufacture and sale of alcoholic liquor in the United States is no a further example of the use and abuse of power to change social order. According to Stott (1984:47),

The National Prohibition Party was formed in 1869 by a group of white Protestants. Their motives were admirable. Dismayed by the increase in heavy drinking and drunkenness, especially among poor immigrants, and perceiving this as a threat to public order, they committed themselves to work for the total prohibition of alcoholic beverages. In 1895 the Anti-Saloon League of America was founded by a group of church leaders, and after a campaign of about 25 years Congress passed in 1919 the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, prohibiting the manufacture, sale and transportation of liquor. It came into force a year later, and 46 out of 48 States had ratified it within about two years

Here it is evident that seemingly noble causes have frequently justified the temporary violation of the rights and dignities of others. Thus the morality of the use and abuse of power is a major concern of the revolutionary approach. The motivation of the reformer or revolutionary may arise more from of a thirst for power than from a compassionate response to the human condition.

B. Stratification

Preoccupation with position and the stratification of people frequently follows a revolution. C.S. Lewis (1947:78) is on record to have said, "I am very doubtful whether history shows one example of a man who, having stepped outside traditional morality and attained power, has used that power benevolently".

How does the revolutionary approach find ultimate significance in its cause? What values and attitudes guarantee that those who feel exploited and violated will not become the new exploiters in the society? What attitudes guarantee that they will not have other interests beyond those of the exploited and oppressed?

The Christian community has often taken an either/or approach to the radical solution. On the one hand, we see the solution in terms of the negative external conditions. We see the need both to correct those conditions and to change institutions and organizations responsible for them.

On the other hand, we also see the need for a radical change in the internal condition of the individual. Identifying the victims and villains in such circumstances becomes highly complicated, even though it is often pursued with considerable energy. We need to confront the following questions as we consider the radical revolutionary solution: How do we view our fellow human being? What do we see as the basic causes of sin and sickness? What are our attitudes toward humanity in general and individuals in particular? How are we dealing with our own task of negotiating needed changes in the social order? Are the use and abuse of others and the acceptance of position and stratification acceptable practices in the task of managing our relationships? Should Christians relate to the broader community in a spirit of antagonism and hostility? What does hating sin and loving the sinner really mean? It is a fact that the Christian community has a history of advocacy on behalf of the victims of injustice. While Christianity does not seek conflict, to be an advocate for the victims of injustice carries with it the potential for conflict with those in power.

However, anger toward those who oppress others and oppressive social institutions, must be evaluated carefully. Alliance with rightwing or left-wing political parties is an attractive option for people seeking simple answers to society's problems. The prophetic role of the church can be lost if it identifies with a political system or parties¹⁰⁷. If we are not careful in our commitments, we can compound the problems of

¹⁰⁷ The case in point is cited by Goba (1998:25) when he said, "One of the serious challenges that we confront in the South African context is to articulate a faith that addresses the current context. Many critical theological voices are now part of the new political establishment or hold high positions within the new system. As a result, there is an absence of a critical voice to challenge the policies of the new government. The temptation of political correctness is too great to want to expose the contradictions of the new social order...Finding a new faith under a secular state in which some of the key positions are

those victims of exploitive social systems. The Church could use exploitive conditions not because it cares much about victims but seeks to enhance its position in the modern world.

7.5.2.2 The Withdrawal Approach

Another approach dealing with self and culture is the separation solution. In this solution, the injustices of the social order are considered to be beyond change. Only the Lord Jesus Christ is capable of changing the situation when he comes. The solution, therefore, is to withdraw. Sometimes individuals have been so victimized that they withdraw psychologically and/or socially from society. Perhaps they have tried the revolutionary solution and have come out defeated and frustrated. In conditions such as these, pietism may seem to offer temporary comfort. Christians in this situation may “sit back in complacency or at most they pray that God will intervene, without pulling up their sleeves and dirtying their hands” (van der Walt 2003:507).

The separation solution takes many forms, ranging from individual isolation to the creation of isolated communities that offer security and survival. While the revolutionary solution takes the approaches of power and position, the separation solutions tends towards two approaches, separatism and isolation.

Does the separation solution represent attitudes of superiority and indifference? The issue of power may even be a hidden factor, since there are power and territorial issues within separatist movements.

Involvement with the social order might jeopardize that power base and threaten us with loss of territory. Or is the separation based on insecurity and fear of being overwhelmed by the surrounding social order? The separation solution takes the position that our survival and our needs must be secured ahead of those in the surrounding social order.

This has a direct bearing on how we value of people beyond the parameters of our small social group. It shows up in our attitudes and responses to people caught in networks of

held by Christian leaders poses a formidable challenge. It calls for a need to question the values that prevail.

injustice. How does separatism and isolation responds to the needy and rejected members of society? Are the homeless, the hungry, and abused and violated left outside our structures and our concern?

Church history abounds with illustrations of how Christians have handled the tension between faith and the social order. Monasteries, Christian communes and migration patterns show various attempts to achieve the separation solution. They carved out communities in which they could establish a sense of unity and support for their values so as to lessen, if not eliminate, outside influence.

The evangelical church frequently alternates in its responses to society, either trying to change the social order (revolutionary solution) or to become removed from the social order for security and survival (withdrawal solution). For example, we are deeply concerned about the survival of marriage and family life as we have known them.

To protect our children and adolescents from the surrounding social order, we seriously consider parochial education and programs that will separate them from negative social influence. While there are some strong arguments for such responses, will this represent an overall separatist response that isolates us from ministry to those who are without strength and direction for survival and growth as persons of worth? The New Testament picture of Jesus includes periods of separation and isolation, but only in preparation to respond to human need.

7.5.2.3 The Adaptation Approach

There is another perspective on an approach managing the relationship between self and culture. The pressures and influences of the dominant social order tend toward the solution of adaptation and conformity. Interestingly enough, those who succeed with the revolution solution generally expect that the new social order will adapt and conform to the "new values."

While the revolution solution values power and position, and the separation solution values isolation and social separatism, the adaptation solution tends toward two more approaches: conformity and secularism. In the next chapter, we shall make some

comments on conformity and secularism. In this orientation, the value of persons is based on materialism and pragmatism. What leads to the goal of comfortable acceptance and security impacts attitudes and behavioural response to others. People become merchandise.

The merchandising of persons is clearly present in the adaptation solution. The media is used to develop a value system that markets them (cf. Ndugane 2003). Appearance of membership of the acceptable social group becomes the measure of personhood. Materialism becomes the driving force of life. Possessions become the indicators of success; immediate gratification becomes the goal.

When the church buys into an adaptation solution, it becomes caught up in secularism and materialism. Unless prosperity is defined differently, and its pursuit is directed at a higher level of values and commitment, then prosperity reduces the quality of life within the religious community to that of the marketplace. All of this impacts on how we respond to the needs of others and how we interpret the nature and causes of their predicaments. It is difficult to be sensitive to the injustices of the social order while prospering from them.

It is important to address four parallels between the life-styles and values of the marketplace and what is happening in the religious community. These parallels are: Conformity for Identity – Power for Personhood – Position for Participation – Possessions for Significance.

When conformity, power, position, and possessions rule our lives, the victims of society are ignored. The fires of racism, ageism, sexism, and class pride rage unchecked. The adaptation solution that identifies us with the comfortable majority keeps us from either revolution or separatism. It illustrates how “saving one’s life” is to lose it.

7.5.2.4 The Servant Solution

We have explored three solutions to the task of negotiating a working relationship between the self and the social order. There is a fourth approach that is rooted in the life and teaching of Jesus. This is the servant solution, and it is central to understanding the

incarnation and the teachings of the Gospels. It spans through at least three principles: commission, model, and the mission

A. The Commission

In Luk. 4:18-19, Jesus answers the question of how to negotiate a relationship between the self and the social order by quoting Isa. 61:1-2 to define His own ministry.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Christ's solution to the question is not based on revolution, separation, or adaptation; nor are his values power, position, isolation, conformity, or secularism. Identity is not gained based on conformity to the world's values, nor is personhood based on power. Position does not determine participation, and possessions do not indicate significance. This is a new solution based on another kingdom, the Kingdom of God, "Thy Kingdom come!"

Here the focus is on persons in need, and the key words are grace and service. The commission of Jesus to His disciples was to serve people in all circumstances of deprivation and need. The following phrases capture the essence of Christ's solution: Speak to the poor. Heal the broken-hearted. Release or deliver the captives. Restore sight to the blind. Bring liberty to the bruised, freedom to the oppressed.

These are remarkable words since they cut across all the other solutions. Their focus is not on self and the "in-group" but on others and the rejected or oppressed in society. However, the Jesus solution soon met opposition and rejection near a city wall – on the Cross. Compassion is not a significant value of many people. That is why the Nazareth synagogue attempted to throw Jesus down the cliff.

One of the problems many of us face in trying to live out Christ's commission is that the poor, the captives, and the bruised and needy members of society are usually isolated. They escape our awareness, and thus our consciences and commitment as well. Would

not Jesus relate his Commission to the contemporary problems of poverty, hunger, and homelessness?

We must seek change in the systems that generate these conditions. Christ calls us to take the initiative and respond to those conditions; to pursue justice and act mercifully. This applies to all conditions of the use and abuse of persons, including the injustices of class-consciousness, racism and sexism.

B. The Model

Christ's commission constituted the central theme of his ministry. He demonstrated his faithfulness to this commission. Many people and situations come to mind as we reflect on Christ's ministry: the woman at the well, the "maniac" of Gadarenes, the handicapped person at the Pool of Siloam, the lepers, the hungry thousands, the woman caught in adultery, the blind, people in grief, and people in fear.

Jesus' example in attitude and behaviour personifies the servant solution. The most powerful portrayal of this is found in John 13, where in a dramatic demonstration of what life in the Kingdom of God should be like, he startles the disciples. Jesus steps down from position and power and takes the form of a servant, who with towel and basin washes the dust from their feet. Foot washing may not fit in with our contemporary life-styles and fashion, but the lesson does. The key question is, "Am I committed to setting aside my position, power, and security to minister to those weary and dusty from life's journey?" Losing oneself in service to others is the theme of the Christian walk. In John 13:17, we are told this is the "path of blessing"

Importantly, the preparation for servanthood begins with how we treat one another within the fellowship of the community of believers; patterns of power and position threaten us just as they did the disciples. Stratification based on power and possessions undercut the Christian message.

C. The Mission

The servant solution begins with the commission of our Lord Jesus Christ. His words and example establish the quality of life and relationships within the kingdom of God – first in believers, and through them to all in need. This mission is communicated throughout the Gospels and reaches its climax in Matthew 25, where we hear the responses of those who have either found or missed the servant solution. Here the vision for servanthood is clearly delineated. But who are we to serve? And how? The Hungry are fed. The Thirsty are given drink. The Stranger is invited into the fellowship. The Naked are clothed. The Sick are cared for. The Imprisoned are released

There are physical, psychological, social and spiritual ways of interpreting these words. But they are part of a whole and we are called to a reverence for all who are in need. Reverence for God and our fellow human beings come out of a deep sense of love and grace working in our own lives. The Good News of the gospel is that God has brought new dignity and hope to humanity through the incarnation. In Jesus Christ we meet love and grace. God seeks to redeem all people and we are called to participate in the blessedness of grace in action. We are called to be “grace walkers” who journey by grace and who are servants of those who need to hear the words of grace and love.

The filling of the Spirit is quoted by Paul directly as the counteraction to drunkenness. By inference the Holy Spirit’s infilling is also the counteraction to other social ills such as fornication, covetousness, dishonesty, envy, and murder. Social perversion starts from moral self-determination.

7.5.3 Preliminary Evaluation

Christian action regards the Spirit of God as the determining power through which the law of God is written within the hearts of men. The Holy Spirit is the Divine Executive, putting into practice actions prescribed by a holy God through His son, Jesus. The following aspects should characterise Christian action: 1) It is the spirit of the action that matters primarily, not the action itself. 2) Conformity to the action must not be thought of in terms of the action only. Thoughts and desires are equally important. It is

the heart of a man that matters. 3) The action must be thought of not in a negative manner, but also positively. The whole conception of protest was a negative one. 4) The action promoted by Christians is not to keep the world in a state of obedience, to oppressive rules, but to promote the free development of our spiritual potentials. 5) These Christian actions must never be regarded as an end in themselves. The ultimate aim of all this teaching is that we all might come to know God. The highest aim is to transform the action from a routine into a life, from outward law to inward desire, from the letter that kills into the spirit that makes a way of life. Christians must move away from a compromising position with the world. Sensitivity to the contemporary is essential to any position which is to have relevance. The involvement in Christian action is not an exception to this rule.

Customs and practices of men as social beings are merely symptomatic of a greater human problem. Perhaps this is why mission programmes based on transforming indigenous people at the level of "customs, practices, of men as social beings" did not succeed in the main. Change at this level is not sufficient. For instance, after observing the massive missionary endeavour to evangelise South Africa and he himself being a missionary in Southern Africa, Kenneth Bedwell (1953:99) posed the following question: "Is South Africa Evangelised?" He answered in the negative by saying:

"South Africa is evangelised." We often hear that statement fall glibly from the lips of ignorant people; it is all the more tragic when it comes from a missionary. We are referring exclusively to the natives and to that part of Africa which includes Cape Colony, Natal, Basutoland, Swaziland, Bechuanaland, the Orange Free State Southwest Africa, the Transvaal, and Portuguese East Africa. That South Africa *ought* to be evangelized, with its present missionary strength, is undeniable; that it is evangelized, I challenge. Admitting the fact that in some areas missionaries are falling over one another and sometimes get in one another's way, and also recognizing the splendid work of many societies, large and small, anyone who is in close touch with the situation is compelled to admit that South Africa is not yet evangelized by a long way.

Perhaps the question we should be asking is, have we improved on this since then? Another veteran missionary, C.S. Jenkins (in Parker 1988:45), spoke in the context of what Bedwell (1953) had said, also expressing doubt about the success of exclusive missionary work to transform Africa by saying, "We are going to reach the Africans only by the African". This has a tremendous implication for the Church among

indigenous people of South Africa. But it was T.W. Esselstyn (1952:) who, after observing compassionate missionary work in Africa, concluded by saying:

There is today little witness to the doctrine and experience of second blessing holiness in South Africa and even comparatively little effort to bring converts from heathenism into a definite born-again relationship with God.

Perhaps the failure to impact South Africa with the transforming gospel of Christ is the emphasis on attempting to civilise an African to the level of customs and practices to conform to those of the sending countries. No one other than J.N.K. Mugambi (1998:546) better portrayed what much of the missionary endeavour consisted of prior to or during the decolonisation of Africa. He gives us the following illustration with accuracy.

<i>Europe – Missionary</i>		<i>Africa – Prospective Convert</i>
Degree of perfection 100%		Degree of perfection 0%
Christian	>	Pagan, Heathen
Theistic	>	Animistic
Holy	>	Profane
Angels	>	Evil Spirits
Saints	>	Ancestors
White	>	Black
Civilised	>	Primitive
Decent	>	Barbaric
History	>	Prehistory
Affluent	>	Destitute
Democracy	>	Anarchy
Illegitimacy	>	Legitimacy
National	>	Tribal

According to Mugambi (1998:546) “the ideological goal of mission, according to this dialectic, is to bring Africans from ‘imperfection’ to ‘perfection’, and convert them from ‘animism’ to ‘Christianity’. If we were to be consistent with what we have been saying, the grand resultant state may have been civilisation and not Christianization. In this fashion the church would assume the role of a disseminator of culture and a civilising agency (Bosch *et al.* 1980). Civilisation may resemble Christianization or part of it but cannot supersede it. The problem of human beings is deeper than the cure that civilisation may provide.

Having seen that the mass of literature on the Church bespeaks the difficulty of dealing adequately with all the issues, especially in so brief a study, then the question we should now be seeking to address on the basis of what we have said in this study, is what kind of agenda should the Church in Mission develop if it is to give positive witness to the indigenous people of South Africa and thus work towards the furthering of the kingdom of God? Will the revolutionary approach do for indigenous people of South Africa? Or, will the withdrawal approach be sufficient? Or what about an adaptation approach? Will the servant approach be suitable? This and other questions will be tackled in the next chapter.

7.6 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter argued at greater length that the Church has a relevant mission to the indigenous people of South Africa. But if the Church is to realize its mission it needs to rediscover the mission of its individual members. The question of the credibility of the Church was raised, and we have pointed out that the credibility of the mission of the Church does not reside with the Church as a corporate body, nor with individual members of the Church, but with Christ who builds the Church (Mat. 16:18).

On account of this we also said that the Church may fail to perform God's mission. But that does not mean that God has failed, or that the Christian faith was *ipso facto* ineffective. The history of the Church is the history of the Church struggling to build God's Kingdom on earth, and the Church is continuing to struggle for the Kingdom of God on earth. Every time Christians in whatever culture they found themselves are praying, "May Thy Kingdom Come, May Thy Will be done on earth as it in Heaven".

Nevertheless, the Church is both an organism and an organisation. As an organism it enjoys special mystical union with its Head, Jesus Christ. But as an organisation it models the values of the Kingdom of God on earth. However, the values of the Kingdom of God are not to be confused with a particular culture, Western, Eastern, Asian or African. The values of the Kingdom of God are expressed through Christ's life. Christ's life is imparted to individual members of the Church through God's judicial acts of justification, regeneration and adoption and sanctification. Sanctified Christians

are units of the mission of the Church. They are endowed with Spiritual Gifts to perform the ministry.

Again, the failure of the Church in its mission is fairly documented in some elements of emerging indigenous religious trends, particularly Black Theology. Black Theology has been described variously as "critique of South African Christianity," as "a call to liberating mission," etc. Therein the mission of the Black Messiah was espoused; and mission meant re-evangelisation, societal transformation, Black self-acceptance, etc.

We argued that elements of emerging indigenous religious trends only had partial success in that they largely focussed on a particular culture, Africa and Africanisation. During the process, they became insensitive to the needs of the poor whom they purported to be serving. For instance, the majority of Black theologians have are civil servants in the present dispensation.

The worst these elements achieved was to divide the members of the Church rather than uniting them. These elements largely distinguished between white Theology, Black theology, Feminist theology, African theology, and sometimes a Black God and White God, etc. All these lost unity of purpose.

However the values of the Kingdom of God are more than those of a particular culture since they transcend the values of any culture on earth. They may not, as we have said, be restricted to a particular culture, but are embodied in the living Christ. In Chapter 3 we discussed two types of cultures, the one on the surface and the other the background; the external and the innate.

We have argued that the role of the Church in a changing South Africa has been more than once questioned and the task of the Church has been more than once defined. We have also pointed out how, in the minds of many people, the Church seemed to have all answers to every problem confronting human situations, and perhaps rightly so because the Church is the salt and the light of the world (Mat. 5:13-16).

We have seen how the Church came under severe attack (*Kairos Document* 1986; *Concerned Evangelical* 1986) for seemingly its apparent role in "supporting the status quo" and in its role in approaching ideologies of colonialism, capitalism, communism

and *Apartheid*. In these contexts and others, the Church was accused of seemingly abandoning its prophetic calling.

While accusations of this nature are an eye-opener, what is not often said is that the loss of its prophetic role was not a recent development, but the result of the church uncritically accepting social favours from the state in the wake of Constantine's victory. It is the present pattern when religious leaders prosper because of the misery of the poor on the ground. Talk shows about the poor, the jobless and the vulnerable have become a popular trend in Africa. The scene is one where delegates from many parts of the world will converge on luxury hotels and convenient conference centres to talk about the poor; punctuating their discourses with hot lunches and dinners, etc. While being aware that somewhere a poor child goes to sleep with an empty stomach. To break a piece of bread for the poor, do I need to read an extended research paper? To share food with the disadvantaged, do I need a well-calculated speech? To have regard for the needs of others, do I need to book an air flight to a distant country?

It will also be naïve to suppose that the modern church has ceased to supplicate wittingly or unwittingly for social favours from the state. We have already mentioned the trend of key church leaders moving up the ladder to occupy powerful positions in the government.

However, we have also tried to distinguish between the Church as a corporate body and its members who are the individual entities making up the Church. It follows then that people as individuals may have some preferences different from those of the Church as a corporate body. In such cases, it cannot be readily presumed that personal preferences and choices were representative of those of the Church as a corporate body. In the next chapter we shall conclude this study by considering some of the implication of what we have said in this study.

CHAPTER 8

Church in Mission: Implications and Conclusions of the Study

8.1 Introduction

Thus far my concern has been primarily with the Church in Mission in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends. I have explored the topic with a view to understanding two objectives: 1) to address the question, *how the Church in Mission could, in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends, order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa*; 2) to understand whether elements of emerging indigenous religious trends in South Africa afforded the Church an opportunity to recoil under the glaring failures of the past or an alternative opportunity of declaring its faith.

If we were to begin with the second objective, clearly, the weight of evidence presented in this study indicates that elements of emerging indigenous religious trends offer the Church an alternative opportunity to declare its faith. For instance, in Chapter 3 we argued emerging elements of indigenous religious trends developed crisis on the nature of the Church. There, the Church was regarded as a “racial institution,” or a “colonial institution”. In turn we argued that the Church has a missionary mandate to the world, and that missionary mandate flows from the nature of the God as the Saviour of mankind which has been delegated to Church. There we also mentioned the universality of mission based on the universality of God’s love, the universality of sin and the universality of atonement.

To the extent in which the Church was accused of its irrelevance, Chapter 4 handled the relevancy of the Church in the present dispensation by exploring dimensions of the missionary mandate of the Church. It was argued that the Church has an inexhaustive and comprehensive divine mandate to the world the major dimensions of which comprise, among others, social, evangelistic, political involvement; cultural and economic concerns.

As far as the Church did not have regard to the experiences of indigenous people, Chapter 5 attempted to give relevancy to the whole study by sampling the experience of indigenous people of South Africa. We pointed out that there is a general reluctance on the part of indigenous people of South Africa to move along with the rapid changes engulfing South Africa now. This is evident from the value placed on African culture. It is felt that these changes are at the expense of African cultures where they have entrenched their identities.

Chapter 6 began to evaluate elements of emerging indigenous religious trends and examined their commitment to their mission of liberating indigenous people since they asserted they were speaking from Black experience and for Black people in South Africa. Their commitment to serving indigenous people of South Africa was questioned. However, it became clear that their mission largely aborted as leading theologians turned their backs on their enterprise to serve in the present dispensation.

Chapter 7 attempted, to bring Church in mission to the fore. Various methods of social involvement were explored. It was argued that the Church has a relevant mission to Africa and to the people of South African in particular. However, it was pointed out that the Church needs renewal to be effective; and that this renewal needs to start on the level of individual members as people who make up the Church.

Based on what we have said so far we would like to explore some of the wider implications of the Church in Mission if it has to order its life and practices so as to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa. Now is the time to be concise and be more specific, to deal with fundamental aspects of the Church contributing to its renewal.

It is our firm belief that if the Church in mission has to order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa, we need first to speak to ourselves; secondly if it has to order its life and practices in order to give positive witness to indigenous people in South Africa, the Church should speak to our world.

In chapter 3 we explored the nature and the character of the Church. There it was argued, "Before embarking on its commissioned mission activity, the church must first

be the church” (1991:31). Therefore, on being the Church we first need to speak to ourselves. It would be enlightening if we were to do this by distinguishing between the ‘fact of the past’ and the “condition of the present”.

As far as the former is concerned, as believers we should always remember our privileges in Christ and our responsibilities on the ground. This means we should be celebrating and rejoicing over what God has done for us as believers in Christ. Yet there should be another clear note — it is concern for our responsibilities on the ground. In addition to the “fact of the past” and the “condition of the present” there is a challenge of the future.

Now, we would like to express this concern in imperative terms. To draw a contrast between the fact of the past and the condition of the present we shall make use of indicative terms. The indicative mood is a statement of fact – that is, was, shall be. The imperative mood is a command – this must be, or a request that is being made. Therefore when we speak of what we as the members of the Church are, were, or shall be, it is the indicative, but when we speak of what we as the members of the Church must do or be, it is the imperative. Furthermore, the imperative is based on the indicative. It is because of the indicative that we as members of the Church could be commanded to do or to be. It is because of what we as the members of the Church are that it could be pointed to what we must be and do. This is significant because we recognise the fact that Christian witness is borne not only by our doctrines, not only by our deeds, but also by our attitudes, and this is especially the case if the Church in mission would bear positive Christian witness to the indigenous people of South Africa.

8.2 Church in Mission: Speaking to Ourselves

On speaking to ourselves, we should deal with issues of complacency in the presence of sin, complacency in the wake of secularism, complacency in the face of conformity, and complacency in the wake of emerging indigenous religious trends.

8.2.1 Complacency in the Presence of Sin

“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (Romans 6:1). This is a question of concern answered in the negative, “God forbid”. Then follows the indicative: “We died to sin, how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Rom. 6:2-4). Very often, we believers as members of the Church do not realise the implication of our new faith in Jesus Christ. It is very possible that it was the similar lack of spiritual understanding that Paul encountered and alluded to when wrote to the Colossians:

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience, joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:9-12).

Such a concern is based on the indicative that Paul heard about it ever since:

For he delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13-14)

Then Paul exhorted them through the imperative: “keep seeking the things above” (Col. 3:1) and “set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Col. 3:2) because of the indicative: “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3; cf. 3:1). Paul’s imperative reaches a climax:

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry (Cor. 3:5)

But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another (Col. 3:8-9) .

And so as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgives you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love which is the perfect bond of unity. And let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body: and be thankful. Let the word of God richly dwell within you with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in our hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father (Col. 3:12-17).

In the light of these indicatives and imperatives, are we as members of the Church in South Africa free from race prejudice and self-righteousness ourselves, before we presume to bear our witness to the world in general and in particular to indigenous people of South Africa? What is our attitude as members of the Church to the poverty-ridden society in South Africa? What complacency in the presence of sin can do to the Church in South Africa? For one thing, sin hardens our attitudes toward the suffering of the poor. But, for another thing, sin weakens mission sensitivity.

8.2.2 Complacency in the Wake of Secularism¹⁰⁸

The Church has its mission in a secularised world. Being secular is opposed to authoritarianism. This makes religious customs and traditions fall apart in the face of secularism. It also does not necessarily mean that the importance of individual choices would be excluded due regard to the context. (cf. Thompson 1983).

“Constitutionally, the new South Africa understands itself as a secular state, in the sense that no religion is to be privileged or even ‘sheltered’” (Wainright 2000:90). But we are

¹⁰⁸ According to Kruger & Steyn (1985:215), “The word secularization means more than just the imperilment of religion. It refers to a specific historical process that occurs in the modern era, a process which originated in the Christian West but which has now spread throughout the world, posing problems for all religious traditions. Berger (in Kruger & Steyn 1985:215) defines secularization as “the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols. Basically secularization has an objective side and a subjective side. Objectively, secularization includes a broad range of phenomena such as organized religion’s loss of influence, decline in the religious content of the arts, philosophy and literature, and the rise of modern science, with its autonomous, nonreligious approach to the world. Subjectively, there are indications of growing numbers of people whose view of the world and humanity is no longer colored by religious interpretations. Harvey Cox (in Thompson 1983:720) regards secularism as idolatry of this worldly-system, as opposed to “secularity,” which is a strategy of functioning in the world.

not the first to live in a secular world. Modern Dorsey (1965:385) states that the Early Church was thrust forth into the world that was largely secular. However, secularism is as old as Noah's ark itself. No nation ever modelled secularism than the generation of Noah and the generation of Lot. Jesus says:

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. The flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the day of Lot. People were eating and buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulphur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all (Luk. 17:26-29)

Secularism is the self-consuming attitudes characterised by indifference to God as mentioned in this passage. The manifestations of secularism are prevalent in South Africa today. Perhaps it would be helpful to note some:

8.2.2.1 Devaluation of Religion

It is usual that many people in South Africa would profess themselves to be either Christians or followers of ATR. According to Geoffrey Wainwright (2000:85), "Some observers now reckon Africa, or rather sub Saharan Africa, to be 'a Christian continent', or at least to be on the verge of becoming such".

However is apparent that only a small percentage of the population will be found in church services on Sunday mornings. Large crowds of people are either gathered at sports fields or populating city parks and city malls quite indifferent to God and quiet oblivious of their spiritual needs.

Those adhering to ATR on the other hand, talk so much about it, but know so little about it. Secularism is an attempt to live or model life without the grace of God; it is not apathetic or interested in the Christian faith but is a positive rival, an alternative religion. W.A. Visser't Hooft (in Dunn *et al* 1981:124), says

The message is that life itself is divine and that the time has come to get rid of the life-denying doctrines and morals of the Christian

faith...It is high time that Christians realize that they are confronted with a new paganism...the worship of created things”

8.2.2.2 Devaluation of Moral Life

The loss of the culture of *ubuntu* (van der Walt 2003) manifested by the loss of religious and customary values in society, is apparent in the disintegrating of family life. Many South Africans believe that South Africa can be revived by re-instilling the culture of *ubuntu*. The launch of the Moral Regeneration Movement by the government helped to stimulate this concept. However, as we have seen, the state is simply playing with the emotions of its citizens since it has constitutionally committed itself as a secular state. Perhaps this is well meant since South Africa is a multi-cultural and multi-religious society with ATR being one of many religions in South Africa. The country can no longer be described as a Christian state. But the Moral Regeneration Movement seems to be overcome by the rate of moral degeneration on the ground. The media reflect acts undermining moral life.

8.2.2.3 Devaluation of Human Life

Crime in South Africa has become endemic, and further talk about it paints a nasty picture of the country. The fact of crime has been repeatedly indicated in the course of this study and elsewhere (Ndungane 2003). Crime is fuelled by the fact that human life is increasingly devalued in the secular society. The interpretation of human life is no longer coloured by religious interpretation, such as humans were made in the image of God, since God does not feature in secular society. Some have tried to locate the source of crime in poverty, believing the elimination of poverty could reduce levels of crime. This is pleasing to the mind, but as we have shown throughout the study, changing the conditions on the ground does not amount to transformation. A number of instances have been suggested as examples.

8.2.3 Complacency in the Face of Materialism

Materialism, like secularism, is as old as mankind. This means that what has been true in the primitive generations is true to modern society. Writing about the primitive societies Paul said:

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking was darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is for ever praised. Amen (Rom. 1:21-24)

Materialism has a negative impact on moral and religious life. Materialism means inordinate craving for things, such as food, clothes, and other conveniences for their own sake. Materialism is well illustrated in Balcomb's "new political elite" which is characterised by "posh cars, posh houses, and posh salaries" (1998:56). Ndungane (2003:34) correctly points out that:

We live in a world in which our media, particularly television, reinforce the view that money and riches should be worshipped. It is a world in which money enjoys more powerful rights than human rights. Only among the faith communities does there seem to be any will to challenge Mammon, the god of riches.

Modern societies want to enhance their appearance by doing everything good externally: good looking, wearing expensive clothing and so on. But they would frequently not care less about what is going inside their lives. "Your beauty," says Peter "should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (I Pet. 3:3-4).

8.2.4 Complacency in Conformity

We often do not want to be seen and perceived as different for we feel insecure if we are. We feel ill at ease if we find ourselves different from our fellows. Conformity provides us with a cloak to hide in the mass in order to avoid our individual responsibility. For this reason, the Church is wary to raise its voice against prevailing morality; lest people would perceive it as outdated; lest people would not take it seriously any longer. Thus conformity brings about lukewarm church. But Scriptural imperatives are crisp and clear: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing will" (Rom. 12:2).

8.2.5 Complacency in the Wake of Emerging Indigenous Religious Trends

Elements of emerging indigenous religious trends have served greatly to awaken the Church in mission to its pressing duty - embarking on mission. For some time mission among indigenous people of South Africa has been largely the task of expatriate missionaries while churches among indigenous people were alienated from mission. The Church will need to renew itself and rediscover its missionary responsibility. Renewal of the Church is not complete in isolation of mission. Reference was made to the fact of an expatriate missionary saying that would reach the Africans only by the African and this has a tremendous implication for the Church among indigenous people of South Africa. The Church in mission should accept its missionary calling as a non negotiable commitment.

8.3 Church in Mission: Speaking to our Country

Much has been changing in South Africa, especially on the political level. Colonialism and Apartheid as far as policy frameworks are concerned, are things of the past. Practically, South Africa is on the verge of a great transformation through which all who live in it may reach a state of true state of humanity, free from the obsession of

race, tribe and class. In view of this South Africa regards itself as a new country, the new South Africa. The country is indeed new.

But South Africa also stands on the verge of being more of a nightmare for the poor. Granted that everything has changed, however present conditions generated by the 17 century colonialism and decades of Apartheid rule are not changing. Thus, South Africa is a country of vast contrasts where there is appalling poverty amidst great affluence. The gap between the poor and the rich is ever widening. The poor are fast becoming strangers in the country of their birth.

The government should be commended for its commitment to provide housing and electrification, and programmes of alleviating poverty like social grants, etc. But conditions in townships are nevertheless, appalling. They are exacerbated by increasing levels of poverty which breeds low self-esteem, negative self-respect and a loss of a sense of self-worth. This is in spite of the commitment by government through its media to instil concepts such as self-love, pride, Africanism, and others. All these are being undermined the immorality engulfing South Africa. South Africa is spiritually paralysed, and thus handicapped. People in these conditions are susceptible to manipulation by the rich and the power-hungry to secure their approval in order to climb ladders to fortunes.

Pouring material, food, clothes, housing, etc. into townships will alleviate the pain of hunger for a time, and that will be a great help, but it will not recover the sense of self-respect, self-esteem and self-worth. Perhaps to illustrate what we are trying to say here would clarify our point. If it were possible to swap places so that the rich are in townships and the poor in suburbs for a year or two or more, it would hardly make any difference.

As the Church in mission we need to ask hard questions: What is the fundamental problem facing indigenous person? Are they overwhelmed by freedom? Are they resenting changes sweeping throughout the world? However, some of them do not even know what is happening and care much less about daily events. Their concern is survival, and where to get the next meal.

On the other hand, the government has legalized gambling, which takes its toll largely on the poor, depriving them of their last cents by promising instant richness. The Church in mission should deplore this trend of exploitation. This is in spite of the government promise that gambling (Lotto) was in the best interests of the poor since a certain percentage of the money would be redeployed back to the community.

The government acknowledges that alcohol abuse continues to be a problem, especially on South African roads. But in the media alcohol is presented in positive terms, something that can refresh those using it. Along with these, should be added the dangers that alcohol causes. Thousands of people continue to lose their lives on account of alcohol related accidents, not to mention domestic violence influenced by the abuse of alcohol.

On the other hand, the Moral Regeneration Movement is commendable. It shows that our country has noted the seriousness of rising levels of immorality. However, the Moral Regeneration Movement lacks models on the ground. People often look up to those in the privileged position of leadership for moral guidance. But the culture of corruption seems to be having the better of most of them.

8.4 Conclusion

The Grace of God is greater than ever. It is still greater for the indigenous people of South Africa. Beyond our cultural differences and limitations and yonder on the top of the holy mountain, Christ beckons us transcend our cultural limitations, and come to him. As we look down on earth we become more and more European, more and more Shangaan, more and more Tswana more and more Xhosa, more and more Venda, more and more Zulus, more and more Afrikaners, more and more Muslim, more and more Pakistani, etc. But as we look up to him on that holy mountain, our cultural differences are but relative, and as we look to one another, we see the reflection of Christ. God's ancient call to mankind is the call to holiness. Holiness is the hope of Africa and the hope of South Africa.

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