

## The Holy Spirit in creation

According to Moltmann (1985:9) the trinitarian interpretation of creation in theological tradition has tended to emphasise God the Father as creator, in contradistinction to his creation, in a monotheistic way. Consequently attempts were made to develop a specifically christological doctrine of creation. Moltmann, however, deliberately chooses to focus on the third person of the trinity: creation in the Spirit. He argues that all divine activity is pneumatic in its manifestation. It is always the Spirit who brings the activity of the Son to its goal. Everything that exists does so through the inflow of the cosmic Spirit's energy and potency. 'This means,' says Moltmann, 'that we have to understand every created reality in terms of energy, grasping it as the realized potentiality of the divine Spirit.'

Moltmann (1985:11-12) notes a similar interpretation in Calvin's work. To Calvin the Holy Spirit, the 'giver of life' of the Nicene Creed, is the fountain of life (*fons vitae*). Just as the Holy Spirit is poured out on all created beings, so Calvin's 'fountain of life' is present in everything that exists and lives:

If the Holy Spirit is 'poured out' on the whole creation, then he creates the community of all created things with God and with each other, making it that fellowship of creation in which all created things communicate with one another and with God, each in its own way. The existence, the life, the warp and the weft of interrelationships subsist in the Spirit. 'In Him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28).

The cosmic Spirit referred to by Moltmann and Calvin has no relation to Stoic pantheist notions. It remains God's Spirit acting in this world in the differentiated modes of *creating, preserving, renewing and consummating* life. In view of this I fully agree with Moltmann's (1985:112) basic assertion:

*Creation in the Spirit is the theological concept which corresponds*

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

Faced with ... (the progressive destruction of nature and the pile-up of nuclear armaments) we have only one realistic alternative to universal annihilation: the non-violent, peaceful, ecological world-wide community in solidarity (my italics).

Moltmann introduces several distinctions to explain the position in creation that he assigns to the Spirit. We shall not dwell on these, but merely note that an integral part of his view is that of God's immanence in creation. He also refers to the interpenetration (*perichoresis*) of the trinity – the social doctrine of the mutual indwelling of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In this interactive principle (God in the world and the world in God; heaven and earth in the kingdom of God; soul and body united in the life-giving Spirit into a human whole; etc) *there is no such thing as a solitary life*. All living things, each in its own distinctive way, live in, with, from and for one another. This trinitarian interpenetration – which shows a distinct parallel with African religious holism in which nothing is solitary or self-existing – is the key to Moltmann's envisaged ecological doctrine of creation. *Inasmuch as the cosmic spirit is also the organising principle of human consciousness*, it is important to remember that through the Spirit we are bound together with other people socially and culturally (an interlocking association which can be described as the common spirit of humanity) and

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

Why this lengthy discourse on Moltmann's views? I include it because I subscribe to the main tenets of his ecological doctrine and because of its relevance to the AICs. Moltmann's idiom may be alien and the con-

text of his appeal may be mainly the academic West and the threat of modern industrialisation to our planet. He observes, however, that *our only realistic alternative to annihilation lies in the solidarity of a worldwide ecological community*. This is where, for Africa, traditionalist ecological concerns and the enacted theology of the AICs enter into it. The latter's vision of creation in the Spirit can help to mobilise and inspire the desperately needed ecological mass movement. Besides, Moltmann's views on the cosmic spirit in creation poignantly express a central concern of AICs of the prophetic type.

### 5.1 The Holy Spirit as the 'fountain of life'

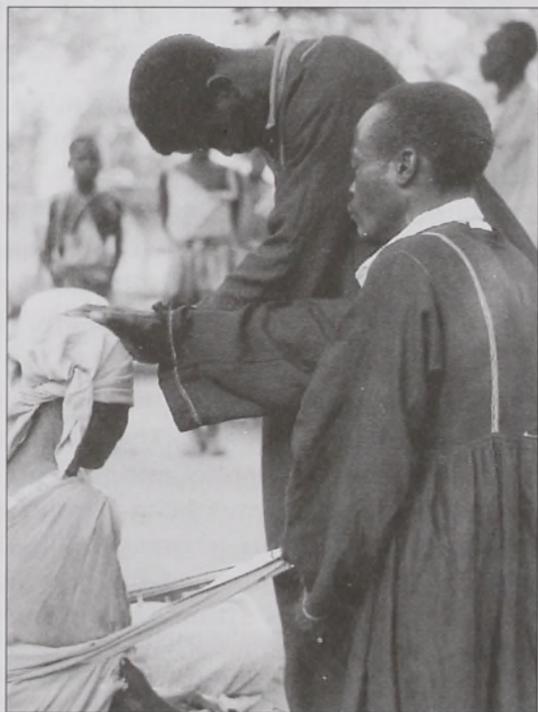
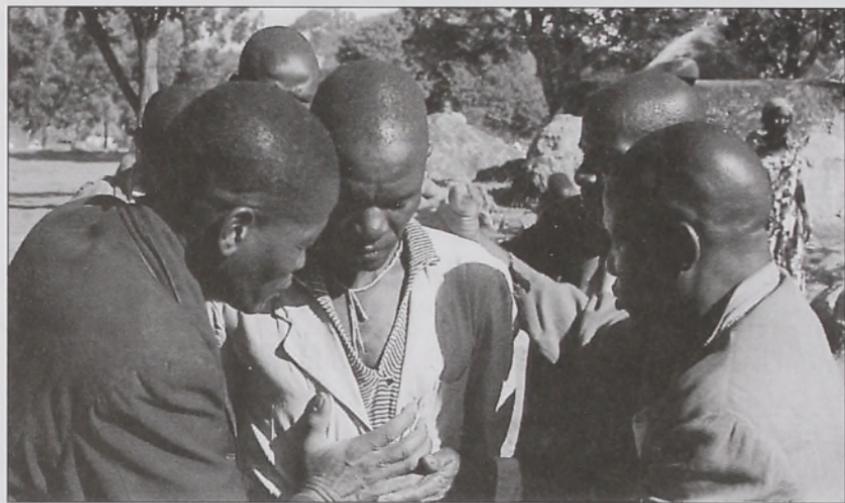
In some respects the AIC prophets of Africa probably understand and experience the life-giving power of the outpoured Spirit better than either Calvin or Moltmann does. Their knowledge is shaped by their non-Christian forefathers, who sensed as well as any Old Testament sage that the *mweya* (spirit)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

Observe, for instance, a Zionist 'maternity clinic' in which the ritual and worship revolve entirely around new human lives. The expectant mothers wear holy cords around their bodies to ward off the attack of evil powers such as witches. Special prayer meetings and dances invoke the presence of a protective Holy Spirit. In the early morning the prophetesses prepare holy water and take all the newborn babies outside into the rays of the morning sun where they are stripped naked and sprinkled liberally with the life-preserving water of the Spirit.

Witness, too, the healing ceremonies of the sick, where the Holy Spirit's power is symbolised by smoke to repel harmful spirits. There are hours of sympathetic pastoral counselling between prophet and patient; laying on of hands, touch of the leader's holy staff, sprinkling of holy water and the use of a host of symbolic objects to cure or preserve life. In a sense, too, the blessing of the seed for the crops and the pegging of maize fields with prophetically blessed stakes symbolise the healing and protective power of the Holy Spirit over inanimate things.

All these symbols testify to the outpouring of the Spirit, the fountain of

Plate 36 Healing activities through laying on of hands in the ZCC (top) and the First Ethiopian Church (*Topia*) (bottom) witness to the basic belief of AICs in the healing and life-giving power of the Holy Spirit



life in creation. It is a chorus of supplication. It takes place in the midst of suffering. But in the final analysis it is a massive celebration of faith to honour the only true source of life, the Holy Spirit.

This massive testimony to the Spirit's life-giving powers undoubtedly shows certain flaws. To some participants the holy cord or water which is believed to ward off evil forces is little more than, or equivalent to, a traditional amulet. The cord may be seen as a power in itself, without faith in the triune God playing a significant role. Here the magical belief system still holds sway. In this respect Beyerhaus (1969:75) and Oosthuizen (1968:119-142) have indicated a misinterpretation of the work of the Holy Spirit in the AICs. In my experience among the Shona, however, such misinterpretations are the exception rather than the rule. They resemble our own Western Christian misconceptions when we seek merit rather than evidence of grace in the good works we perform, or when we try to manipulate God to favour us by producing yet another 'truthful' theological statement, even if born of a loveless heart.

Most AIC prophets experience the Holy Spirit as the indwelling Spirit of God, whom they do not control or manipulate. Interviews with prophetic church dignitaries show that the initiative for inspiration or revelation through the Holy Spirit is ascribed overwhelmingly to God and not to any human being. Prophets often declare that they only receive guidance from the Holy Spirit after fasting, Bible study, prayer and seclusion. They also readily acknowledge that these actions are not causal or manipulative, but that the Holy Spirit retains the initiative. Few prophets claim that they can 'give' the fullness of the Spirit to a lay member of the church. It remains an *act of faith*. In addition, the spiritual state of the recipient and the ultimate will of God determine whether there will be new life, preservation of life, healing or special gifts such as prophecy and speaking in tongues (Daneel 1987:262).

In the Spirit-type churches the *fons vitae* flows freely, uninhibited by written dogma. Here no one speaks about 'trinitarian perichoresis'. It simply exists: God *in* the world, and the world in God. In the AIC prophetic community there is no such thing as a *solitary* life, unless of course the presence of a *muroyi* (wizard) necessitates cleansing, sanctification and reconciliation. Through this holistic interpenetration of God, people and things, where the fountain of life is manifest in

unquestioned action, the Spirit has prepared fertile soil for an ecological theology.

The AAEC bears testimony to this. The reflections of leading figures about the origins of their movement show an awareness of the pneumatic action of God both in and since the creation of the universe. Consider the following statements:

*Bishop Farawo:* The Holy Spirit is the founder of this movement, because he first of all created Adam and Eve and gave them the task of keeping the trees and the animals. Today the AAEC is there to continue this tradition, this task of keeping all created things.

*Revd Tawoneichi:* The Holy Spirit is the founder of this movement, in the same way as he was the creator in Genesis, the source of all things. In creating human beings he gave them the task of stewardship, that is, to keep all of creation. We were created specifically for the task of earthkeeping.

*Bishop Machokoto:* Without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the thoughts for this tree-planting task would not have arisen. Bishop Moses's (Daneel's) conviction to unite the churches in earthkeeping endeavour therefore came from the Holy Spirit.

Much like Moltmann's emphasis on *creation in the Spirit* and the *Spirit in creation*, leading AIC earthkeepers associate the third person of the trinity directly with creation. In the same way as the Holy Spirit was active in the original and ongoing creation of all life he (or she) is also the initiator of all earthkeeping endeavour, including that of our movement. It is only the divine source of life which can inspire the kind of concern for creation in human beings which leads to genuine, altruistic stewardship. Thus any lasting environmental contribution of the AAEC is attributable to the inspiration and promptings of the Spirit. Through this divine agency the destiny of humankind, according to Tawoneichi, is irrevocably bound up with the upkeep of creation. The presence of the Spirit in fellow human beings, in trees, rivers and mountains (Mandondo's sermon, appendix II:375–380) – in other words, the ongoing evidence of divinely given life – is what constitutes human awareness of the *immanence of the creator God* in creation (*supra*:60, 117). This is the source of this holistic interpenetration between Creator-Spirit, humans and all other living or inanimate things in creation.

That the AAEC understanding of the Holy Spirit in creation is informed by more than an awareness of Spirit presence in nature, and that this understanding is not associated exclusively with the original act of creation – the distant past – is evident in Bishop Mupure’s sermon at a ceremony at his homestead in February 1994. He said:

God’s Word revealed quite clearly today that our relation to the environment and our survival are totally interlinked. The Word feeds us with the message of the Spirit. *Heaven starts here!* It pleases the Holy Spirit if we sort out matters of the earth right here and now! This task of healing the land gives us a good chance of entering heaven, because in keeping trees we have removed the stumbling block (guilt) which could prevent entry into heaven ... In practice all this means that we need to replace the *axe* of destruction with the *hoe*, which is more friendly to the soil. A correct balance between the *axe* and the *hoe* should be found.

These words reflect, first of all, acceptance that guidelines for interpretation of the Spirit’s manifestations in this life are to be found in Scripture. The word of God remains the criterion for assessing Spirit-filled activity, despite varied and often conflicting interpretations of the Bible in AIC circles. In the second place, Bishop Mupure does not doubt that the Spirit urges earthkeeping and that such activity has a direct bearing on entering heaven. *Heaven starts now*, if the Spirit’s call to heal the land is heeded. One could question the notion of human merit which appears to be conditional for salvation, as opposed to God’s free grace. But the Spirit’s presence nevertheless seems to focus and telescope the time of salvation: the origins of life in the past, the nurture of new life here and now, and the assumed prospect of eternal life in heaven, rooted in the present yet reaching out to the future. In the balance between *axe* and *hoe* a new dispensation takes shape. Holistically, in the Spirit of creation, the life of trees and the life of humans (current and/or eternal) interrelate, become one. For, as the AAEC earthkeepers believe, wherever the Holy Spirit takes hold of people and their environment, new life starts.

## 5.2 The Holy Spirit as *murapi venyika* (healer of the land)

On the whole the AIC prophets do not refer to the Holy Spirit as *murapi venyika*, even though the Spirit is central to all their healing activities.

Plate 37 Earthkeeper's exposition of Scriptures in tree-planting context. The word of God is generally recognised as the criterion for Spirit-filled activity

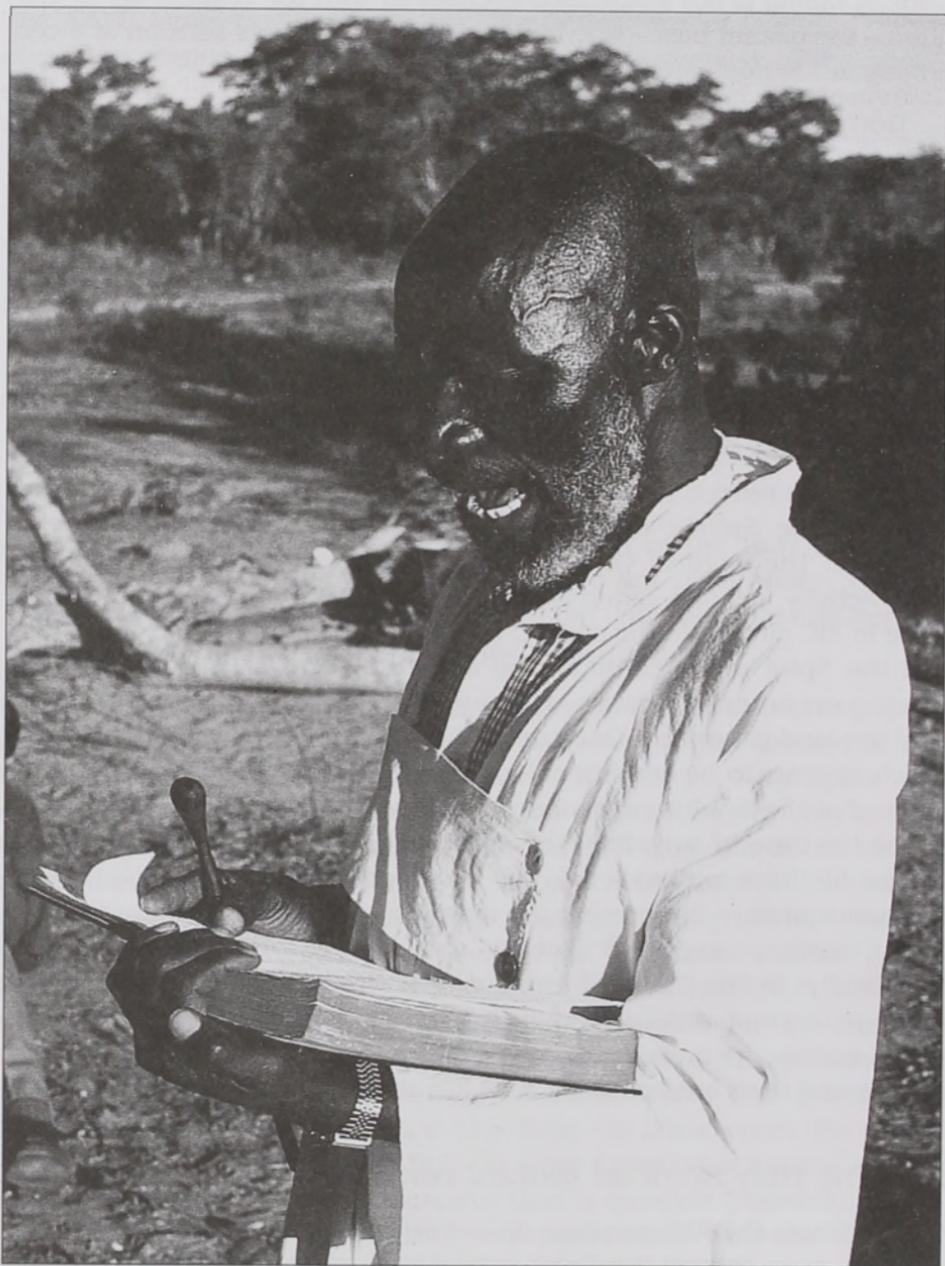
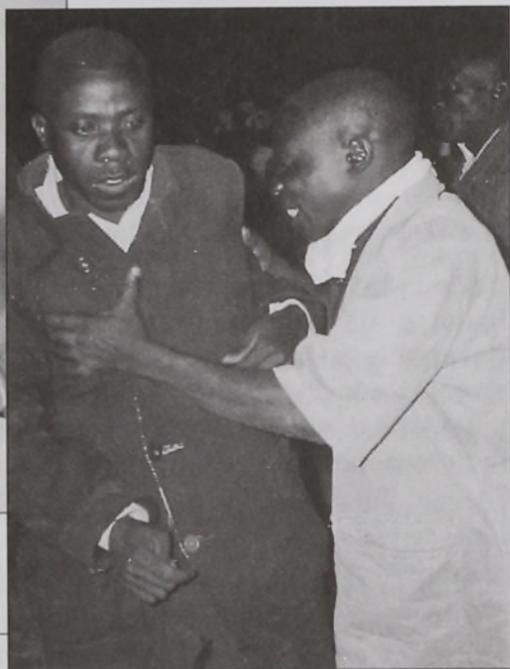


Plate 38 The Holy Spirit is believed to detect, fight and conquer evil. Apostolic and Zionist prophets appeal to the Spirit as they guide purifying sessions of confession prior to baptism (top left), eucharists (top right) and tree-planting (below)



This reflects the tendency in these churches, established prior to their AAEC involvement, to conceive of the life-giving Spirit first and foremost as the healer of humankind. Yet we have noticed that in the tree-planting eucharist healing of people and healing of the land blend into a single totality, as do the functions of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The assumed and professed interpenetration of Son and Spirit is evident in the comprehensive *maporesanyika* healing described in the previous chapter (supra:202–206). *Ritually christology and pneumatology become one* as Africans enact the conviction that ‘the Spirit always brings the activity of the Son to its goal’ (Moltmann). In the promptings of the Spirit, Christ the king (*mambo*), guardian (*muridzi*), saviour (*muponesi*) and healer (*murapi*) of all creation keeps entering life here and now as an incarnate being.

Having said this, it would be repetitive to reconsider all the pneumatic features of healing already mentioned in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, the role of the Holy Spirit as life-giver and healer is so prominent in all the Zionist and Apostolic churches (the vast majority in the AAEC) that some observations about their sacraments in relation to the development of a ‘green pneumatology’ are called for.

In the AIC’s pentecostal tradition the Holy Spirit features pre-eminently as purifier and healer of people in the build-up to both baptism and the eucharist. Prior to the baptism of novices the sermons of church leaders focus increasingly on their experiences of healing through the Spirit. The entire congregation is transformed into a body of witnesses to healing, and the group of believers receiving the baptisands on the far side of ‘Jordan’ stand there as disciples of Christ, healed of sin, brokenness, isolation from meaningful communion, illness and a host of human problems.

Then, when the baptiser enters Jordan, he actually blesses the water by diving into it with a loud splash, or stirring it repeatedly with his holy staff and/or cord. In a sense he or she is transmitting the life-giving force of the Holy Spirit to the water, so that it literally cleanses the baptisands of sin and pollution, totally renewing and healing them. Baptism is therefore also a *healing ceremony*! During the ceremony many members of the congregation will enter Jordan to drink the Spirit-filled water to obtain healing or add meaning to their lives.

At first I was inclined to interpret this feature mainly as a relic of the tra-

ditional magical philosophy – in other words, an attempt by people to lay hold of whatever life force or power could aid them. This may be true of some believers. The question that arises, however, is whether the practice does not present a golden opportunity to widen the interpretation of baptism. Can it not be said that the Spirit's presence in Jordan is a sign of God's creation being redemptively healed? Can we not say that the Holy Spirit manifests him/herself at Jordan as the healer of the land? This would obviously include the converts, who are healed and changed by moving into the body of Christ. But the Jordan river and its often barren environment are likewise changed and taken, symbolically, into the body of Christ the king, so that his redemption is sacramentally proclaimed over the whole of creation.

In that case the drinking of Jordan water symbolises not just the person's healing or salvation, but his or her participation in cosmic healing. The focus shifts from private and personal benefit by the Holy Spirit's healing powers to a statement of human solidarity with all creation and an affirmation of new commitment, through individual conversion, to the healing and restoration of nature. What happens, then, in the sacramental context is that human beings' knowledge about creation through domination is replaced by knowledge gained through communication between them and nature. In a sense one could call it a *baptismal naturalisation of the human being* (Altner, in Moltmann 1985:50): 'It assumes that, fundamentally speaking, the human being does not confront nature: he himself is nothing other than one of nature's products.'

The image of the Holy Spirit as *murapi venyika* is thrown into even sharper relief in the paschal celebration leading up to the eucharist. First, there is the 'seed conference' (*ungano yembeu*), an integral part of Paseka which, as we have seen in the case of the ZCC (*supra*:109, 110), replaces the traditional rain requests at the Matopo oracular shrines. Here the concept of an immanent creator as *muridzi* (guardian) is fused with that of the Spirit as *murapi* (healer). For when drought and pests threaten, the seasons and crops that are guarded are also healed to bear a life-sustaining harvest. Second, there is the need for confessing ecological sins. Here, too, it is the Spirit who heals by laying bare those abuses and violence against nature which obstruct its redemption and life-sustaining fertility. This theme will be considered in the next subsection. Third, it should be noted that, as when the Jordan

water is drunk by believers for its medicinal value, the elements of bread and wine have the same extended or post-symbolic significance to many participants. Mothers with sick babies, for instance, take extra pieces of sacramental bread home for their stricken little ones. We have also noted how at tree-planting eucharists some preachers emphasise the life-giving and/or medicinal value of the bread and wine in the bloodstream of the communicant, the implication being a Spirit-empowered and committed earthkeeping vocation. In the fourth place, the Spirit's healing potency is symbolically transferred to the new woodlot prior to tree planting by sprinkling holy water and pouring holy oil over the area to be restored. In such symbolic action, repeated in numerous variations, the Spirit is seen to overpower the destroyer of creation and to establish the new dispensation of God's kingdom.

To sacramental purists the 'magical-pneumatic' dimension in the ecologically inclusive baptism and eucharist may sound blasphemous. But is this not just another indication that the healing *charis* of Christ's sacrament, combined with the unfathomable movement of the Spirit, mysteriously extends far beyond our theories and conceptions? And does this not mean that we can celebrate the eucharist in a manner which emphasises our corporate identity with nature in Christ, making us as dependent on the Holy Spirit's healing activity as all other natural beings? In these contextualised sacraments of Africa, whether interpreted magically or symbolically, we earthkeepers declare ourselves, under the kingship of our elder brother Christ, his fellow guardians of creation. Likewise, in the therapeutic sweep of the Holy Spirit over all the world we are fellow healers without pretending that we ourselves are the saviours of creation.

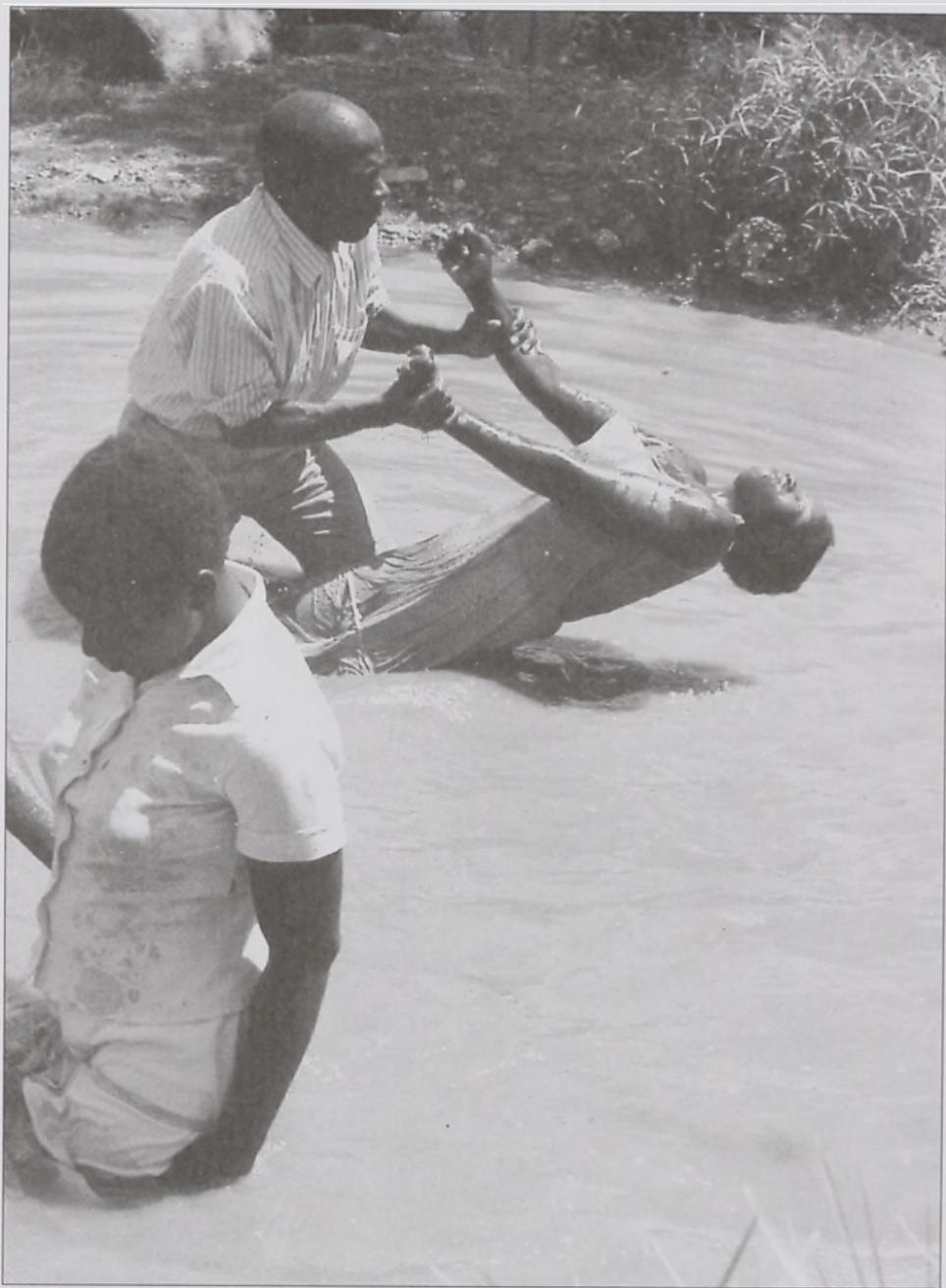
### 5.3 The Holy Spirit versus the destroyer

The basic theme in all African prophetic healing is the struggle between light and darkness, between the almighty Holy Spirit and the evil perpetrated by Satan. Throughout this ministry there are continuous interaction and confrontation between African traditional cosmology and contextualised Christianity. Prophetic diagnosis, attributed to the revelatory presence of the Spirit, invariably identifies afflicting ancestral or alien spirits with demonic powers. Wizardry (*uroyi*) in particular is considered to be the embodiment of evil, Satan himself who epitomises

Plate 39 Relentless combat between Holy Spirit and the destroyer evident in  
Apostolic exorcism of evil spirits



Plate 40 Zionist exorcism of demonic spirits during Jordan baptism illustrates vividly the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit



the destruction of life. Whether diagnosed as demons or *uroyi*, the destructive forces considered to be the cause of any tragedy or malady are driven off through exorcism in the name of the triune Christian deity. In addition a host of symbolic rituals are performed to fortify and protect the threatened party against future demonic attacks. Hence, in a broken world, the lordship of Christ is repeatedly enacted in what is believed to be and experienced as the Holy Spirit's vanquishment and subjugation of the destroyer. The main features of this struggle in the spirit world as it relates to earthkeeping are the following.

### 5.3.1 Emerging awareness of ecological sinfulness

The growing consensus about the near-unpardonable evil of environmental destruction stems from ZIRRCO's conscientisation programmes via workshops, conferences and executive meetings. But above all, the special focus on ecological sins in *maporesanyika* sermons and in the confession ceremony prior to tree planting highlights the presence of the Spirit in the ranks of the earthkeepers. The Holy Spirit, the originator of the movement, is regarded as the primary conscientising agent responsible for the growing awareness of human guilt in the deterioration of nature. Even if this is not always mentioned in sermons, most preachers, if asked, will unhesitatingly attribute the gist of their message to the inspiration of the Spirit. Couched in the idiom of fighting *uroyi* – evil in its vilest and most ruthless form – the struggle between the Spirit and the destroyer is drawn palpably into the existential world of the congregated earthkeepers. The following excerpts from sermons illustrate this point clearly:

*Zionist Bishop Mutikizizi* (at Bishop Mupure's ceremony; Zaka, February 1994):

There is a type of wizardry which destroys the land. It is the wizardry of deforestation. It is a terrible *uroyi*, more destructive than the evil of those who rise at night to hurt people. Some people just fell all the trees to burn bricks or sell firewood and then, to make matters worse, they squander the money on liquor. These people have no insight into the destructive effects of their deeds. They refuse to see! Such is the wizardry of land destruction. This violates the responsibility God gave people when he created the earth. Environmental wizardry (*uroyi hwenyika*) is a grave sin because it

denies the custodianship over creation which Mwari requires of human beings.

*Zionist Revd Chitapa* (at Bishop Marinda's ceremony; Gutu, March 1993):

In Genesis 1:11 it says that God commanded the land to be covered with grass and trees. Now some people hate grass, not knowing its purpose. They simply burn it. Consequently the grazing of our cattle is destroyed. Grass serves as food for cattle, as material for building, as cover to protect the soil against erosion. Land is our inheritance and grass keeps it in good condition. A person who plays with fire and burns the grass will be punished severely. Such a destroyer is a real *muroyi*! There are *varoyi* who use *zvidoma* (psychic creatures, witch familiars). Others are *varoyi* who kill through gossip. They can devastate an entire village. Then there are those who burn the grass. The mother of so and so knows she is a witch. Likewise, you who hate grass and trees know you are a *muroyi*.

God gave us trees for many purposes: fruit trees for our survival, blue gum trees for building, wild trees that simply belong to the soil. But we people are rebels. We ask: why are we created? What is the purpose of our lives? We do not want to see the plans of Mwari, the meaning of life. If we do not heed Mwari's laws of respecting his creation, he will not bless us with abundance as he blessed Jacob. The original rebel was Lucifer, Mwari's son who was chased from heaven. He is Satan the destroyer, who propagates revolt against Mwari's laws.

We elders have taught our children to follow the laws of Jesus, to dance to the drumbeat and horn blast. We also revealed to them that we ourselves are the *varoyi*, the rebels who felled trees in defiance of our forefathers' warnings. They taught us about the *marambatemwa* (holy groves) where the ancestors and Mwari live among the trees.

Come then, let us confess our sins today, our destruction of the land. Some of us have already bought matches to burn the grass. See what Bishop Marinda does here. His prophets expose the sin we indulge in, that of burning grass. *It is the uroyi of heat, of the burnt soil!* Let us all get rid of this *uroyi*: the type which strikes at you with

*zvidoma*, the type which fells the trees and burns the veld. It is because of this wizardry that the Paseka of Jesus was changed. The Paseka (tree-planting eucharist) we celebrate today aims at restoring the land.

*Zionist Bishop Marinda* (at his ceremony; Gutu, March 1993):

All of us must confess our sins as we pass under the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit at the gates (consisting of pairs of prophets). In this way the *sins of tree felling* will be revealed. They kill the land, because where the sledges strip the land the gullies start forming. Consequently people have little land left to cultivate and there is no grazing for their cattle. *I have never seen such wizards!* This differs from the witchcraft which kills an individual at home, for it wipes out an entire tribe (*rudzi*). This environmental *uroyi* destroys everybody. So we queue for confession to be searched by the Spirit. Whoever gets caught out gets caught out. The prophets are here. Stand at the gates, you prophets! Stand at the gates! Reveal to us the wizards who still pull their sledges.

The disquiet of all these preachers about the *wrong relationship* between humans and their environment is very evident. Their call to all participants to confess their rebellion against God through mindless destruction of the ecosystems which sustain life reveal an awareness of the holistic nature of sin as depicted in the Bible, in that it 'not only distorts inter-human relations and human-divine relations, it also affects the life-sustaining harmony between human beings and the Earth' (McDonagh 1985:125). Here the critical consciousness of African peasant society voices insight similar to that of the Western theologian Emil Brunner, who notes that estrangement between humans and creatures coincides with human withdrawal from God: 'The more man distinguishes himself from the rest of creation, the more he becomes conscious of himself as the subject, as an "I" to whom the world is an object, the more does he tend to confuse himself with God, to confuse his spirit with the spirit of God, and to regard his reason as Divine Reason' (in McDonagh 1985:125). What the AAEC earthkeepers are in fact saying is that humans in the local setting arrogantly set themselves up as God in false dominion over the earth, in opposition to God's intentions for creation. Like Lucifer or Satan, they become earth destroyers. In their exploitation of the earth hubris prevents them from

seeing and admitting the life-destroying implications of their actions.

An intriguing aspect of the AAEC perception of ecological sin is that there is no attempt to avoid communal guilt by setting up Satan or evil as a kind of objective force outside humankind, the real source of destruction which exonerates humans from guilt. Instead, the overriding concern with environmental wizardry reflects recognition of a serious flaw in humans, in their relations to both the creator, the life-giving Spirit, and creation. Rosemary Ruether (1992:256) aptly describes such a 'wrong relationship':

... the reality of evil does not lie in some 'thing' out there. It cannot be escaped, and indeed is exacerbated by efforts to avoid it by cutting ourselves off from that 'thing'. Rather evil lies in '*wrong relationship*'. All beings live in community, both with members of their own species and with others on which they depend for food, breath, materials for construction, and affective feedback. Yet there is a tendency in the life-drive itself in each species to maximize its own existence and hence to proliferate in a cancerous way that destroys its own biotic support (my italics).

The 'cancerous way' is described for the African rural situation by Bishop Mutikizizi in terms of random tree felling for short-term gain, without a policy for the future; by Revd Chitapa in terms of grass burning at the expense of humanity's precious inheritance, the earth itself; by Bishop Marinda in terms of sledges still being pulled in defiance of land husbandry codes, causing erosion gullies. The seriousness of these offences is expressed in the idiom of destruction best understood in Africa: *uroyi*, wizardry. Wizards, with their persistent antisocial behaviour, personify evil; the wizard is the destroyer. 'Wrong relationship' lies in not considering the conservationist laws of the creator, in blindly and arrogantly ignoring the impact of environmental destruction on human society and asserting a false dominion which does not respect nature. The result is a form of *uroyi* much worse than the traditional perception of attacks against single individuals. In the words of Chitapa this is the ultimate rebellion against God, the heat of the burnt soil, the heat of mass destruction which opposes and seeks to obliterate the life-giving coolness (*tonhodzo*) of Mwari's Spirit; the heat which in African Christian terms anticipates the apocalyptic pit of fire. Marinda likewise finds this form of *uroyi* life-threatening and much more

dangerous than the traditional practice, for it ultimately wipes out everybody, the entire tribe.

Rosemary Ruether (1992:141) divorces human sin from the issue of finitude. Instead, she relates it to the sphere of human freedom, where people have the option of either enhancing or stifling life. According to her the central issue of sin as distinct from finitude is the following:

... the misuse of freedom to exploit other humans and the earth and thus to violate the basic relations that sustain life. Life is sustained by biotic relationality in which the whole attains a plentitude through mutual limits in interdependency. When one part of the life community exalts itself at the expense of the other parts, life is diminished for the exploited. Ultimately exploiters subvert the bases of their own lives as well. An expanding cycle of poisonous hostility and violence is generated.

Those who abuse their freedom in African rural peasant society are people who disregard the land husbandry laws – both the old *marambatemwa* restrictions of the forefathers mentioned by Revd Chitapa, and modern agro-forestry requirements for sustainable agricultural produce. Unrestricted tree felling and practices promoting soil erosion diminish both arable land and pasturage. Ultimately all of society suffers: the human exploiters who continue sinning against the life-giving Spirit despite the obviously dwindling resources, together with the responsible caretakers of the land and the voiceless denizens of the earth, the animals, birds, grass and trees.

Does the characterisation of the abuse of human freedom in terms of *uroyi* not distort the perception of ecological sinfulness? Does it not reintroduce the traditional practice of branding one or a few individuals scapegoats for causing inexplicable deaths or social ills? And is the fate of environmental wizards not the same as that of the *varoyi* of old – stigmatisation, ostracism, even death?

There is a real danger that the more arrogant tree fellers, grass burners and sledge owners will be stigmatised and identified with the destroyer of life more readily than 'minor' sinners, who may confess to some environmental abuse but conveniently forget that they contribute equally to overpopulation and other less commonly mentioned 'sins' which are also earth-destructive. Pharisaic bigotry, it seems, is not necessarily

absent from the AAEC's concern with environmental *uroyi*. Nevertheless, there are two clear trends indicating that we are not dealing with direct assimilation of an ancient practice with all its negative implications. First, the AAEC preachers' intention when identifying environmental destruction with *uroyi* is to drive home in the collective mind of the audience the tremendous seriousness of the issues at stake. *Uroyi* is evil and heartless. It creates the heat of destruction and spells death, without mercy or compromise. It is the ultimate in exploitation, the antithesis of life-giving forgiveness and redemption; hence, *sin* against God and creation which cannot be countenanced. Second, the sermons quoted above tend not merely to accuse others as *varoyi* but to identify with them, to detect the evil of destructive exploitation in oneself, in *our* ranks. Thus communal guilt is established, the shadow-side of each and every participant. As Revd Chitapa said: 'We also revealed to them (our children) that we ourselves are the *varoyi*, the rebels who felled the trees in defiance of our forefathers' warnings.' In this context, therefore, catharsis within a beleaguered society lies not in identifying and punishing a single *muroyi*, but in admitting all of human society's allegiance to the destroyer and giving everyone the opportunity to make amends.

### 5.3.2 Pneumatic expulsion of evil

*Maporesanyika* sermons reflect more than just awareness of ecological sinfulness. Implicit, too, is a summons to admit common guilt of earth destruction. Such admissions or confessions can only be elicited from individual communicants through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, manifested in prophetic activity. Thus the preachers also propagate their convictions about the revelatory and protective role of the Holy Spirit via earthkeeping prophets. Said Zionist Revd Chamakaita at Bishop Marinda's ceremony: 'Did Jehovah not make use of his *svikiro* (spirit-medium), the prophet Isaiah? And are our prophets here not speaking as the mouthpieces of Jehovah, of Mweya Mutsvene? Our prophets reveal our sins of killing the land. They act as protectors! Thus, if any of you should come here and fell the trees in this woodlot, the *ngozi* (vengeful spirit) you'll provoke will finish off all your kinsfolk. Then our prophets will no longer prophesy on your behalf. They will refuse because you have felled their friends ...'

The earthkeeping prophet's ministry highlights the relentless combat between Holy Spirit and destroyer. As the people file through the 'gates'

to celebrate the eucharist, the intensity of the prophet's emotive glosolalia and body tremors reveals the Spirit's disapproval of the evil which they have perpetrated against creation. Attitudes of arrogance or unconcern for God's creation especially provoke prophetic disapproval, evinced in displays of vehement emotion. These near-frenzied outbursts indicate that grievous sins have been committed against the life-giving Spirit. As in all African healing ceremonies, identification of the cause of the malady is of the utmost importance. Thus the Spirit reveals to the prophet the unconfessed and still hidden sins of each communicant, preventing the mass confession from deteriorating into a generalised, face-saving exercise. When tempers flare and people remonstrate with the prophets, this is considered evidence of the destroyer's resistance. It is in the detection of specific environmental evils committed by each individual and the public admission of guilt that the Holy Spirit's victory over the destroyer is convincingly demonstrated. Such confession, elicited by the Spirit-filled prophet and willingly submitted to by the communicant, represents a kind of purificatory exorcism, a renouncement or expulsion of environmental wizardry.

The sins confessed are numerous: from unwise use of the destructive axe, riverbank cultivation, use of sledges, excessive consumption of firewood, grass burning, neglect of contour ridges and over-cultivation to pollution of water resources, over-fishing, hunting rare game species, hunting out of season, hunting in out-of-bounds areas such as the *marambatemwa* or game sanctuaries, and so forth. Still known by the nickname *Mafuranhunzi* (literally 'the one who shoots the fly', sharpshooter), I often get tripped up by the prophets for my hunting sins in earlier life. In addition I confess to the sin of air pollution through endless use of a vehicle over many years. Maybe through these confessions the Spirit is also pointing to something else – the unequal distribution of means, resources and privileges in Africa, the gap between rich and poor. Taking a vehicle for granted as a privileged white African while working among the poorest of the poor is certainly as bad a form of wizardry as snaring the few remaining rock-rabbits – the sentinels of the ancestors – in the protected zone of a holy grove.

In contrast to the African Apostolic Church of Johane Maranke with its nightlong vigils of confession and purification prior to the celebration of holy communion, the AAEC's tree-planting eucharist does not allow time for the prophets to deal extensively with offending wizards. The *vaPostori*,

for instance, place unrepentant *varoyi* in a special enclosure called *musasa yevaroyi* (windbreak of the wizards). Here a group of *vatongi* (judges) put serious cases on trial throughout the night to determine whether they will be allowed to take communion, or what form of discipline (at worst excommunication) should be applied. If some of the AAEC bishops were to have their way, a similar judgment of unrepentant environmental *varoyi* will be introduced. For the time being, however, those communicants who show signs of resisting or belittling prophetic scrutiny are merely severely rebuked as a sign of the Spirit's disapproval.

To the serious earthkeeper spiritual cleansing ensues after the Holy Spirit's expulsion of evil in the process of confession. This process is characterised not only by the prophets' emotional outbursts but also by a mixture of gravity and laughter, since sins are sometimes confessed in highly original ways, or a prophet may use swear words learnt from a white farmer to rebuke an earth-destroying demon. Humour in such instances seldom reflects irreverence. It is rather a lightness of comic relief in an atmosphere heavily charged with divine significance. In the spontaneous bursts of laughter one feels that God is smiling at the antics of his people.

In traditional rituals to exorcise *uroyi* spirits from their hosts the latter have to physically distance themselves from the destructive agent by leading a black goat off into the bush and leaving it there, or by destroying witchcraft medicines on the bank of a river and then swimming across, away from evil. In the Spirit-type AICs *uroyi* exorcisms also include public burning of all medicines and symbolic objects associated with wizardry, such as witch familiars. In the AAEC's battle against environmental evil the prophets have not yet insisted on the burning of destructive axes, sledges or the bows and arrows of poachers. Yet the expulsion of evil through Spirit-induced confession culminates in the communicant picking up of a seedling and moving to the sacramental table for communion in the body of Christ. This act affirms the individual's rejection of earth destruction and signifies a deliberate choice for life itself, acceptance of the Spirit's life-giving directives. Together with the prophets, the communicants now demonstrate their bondedness and friendship with the trees, their acceptance of the responsibility of tree protection.

The actual tree planting subsequent to holy communion puts the seal on the choice for life and light as opposed to death and darkness. Once

again the Holy Spirit's liberating power is evinced in a bishop sprinkling holy water and soil in the new woodlot to rid the land of any contamination. The final act of addressing the trees as brothers and sisters as they are being planted epitomises the message of salvation to all creation. The *ngozi* (vengeful spirit) of the neglected soil is appeased by the *mutumbu* payment (*supra*:44) of trees, and the *muroyi's* attitude of ruthless exploitation is replaced by genuine service and stewardship. The good news is that the Spirit of life overcomes the destroyer.

### 5.3.3 Theoretical considerations

When assessing the Spirit-based ministry of exorcism in the church of Africa, a distinction can be made between those church leaders and academic observers who either practise or theoretically support such a ministry, and those who oppose it or are highly critical of its seemingly negative implications. The former (eg Ingenozza 1985:179; Hebga, in Lagerwerf 1985:67; Milingo 1984:103; Taylor 1963:211; Daneel 1974:343–347) emphasise the *liberating value* of a ministry which appears to confront the existential needs and fears of people in a ritually understandable and therefore psychologically and religiously satisfying manner. The latter, whose views I outline below, are sceptical of the long-term impact of a practice which is considered counterproductive, in that it reinforces the traditional cosmology and therefore *enslaves people* to the world of demons, wizardry beliefs and fears without providing a realistic Christian solution. The obvious question is: does the AAEC prophets' concern with environmental *uroyi* fall into this trap?

Shorter's (1985:95) reservations about exorcism as a pastoral tool in the church of Africa are closely linked with his views on the destructive impact of witchcraft theory and practice on African society:

Witchcraft is a kind of penumbra of human wickedness, an inborn preternatural power to harm and kill enjoyed for its own sake. To see all the misfortune, especially the more dramatic disasters, as traceable to human causes is intellectually satisfying. It also creates an illusion of control over evil forces, but ultimately it is not credible ... It entails unjust judgements.

Shorter (1985:96) is particularly concerned about the illusory control over evil, the injustice of witchcraft accusations and the witch-finder's

pretence of finally judging the witch. Witchcraft accusation, in his view, is a form of self-salvation or self-justification, a mechanism for evading personal responsibility for misfortune and sinful acts, at the expense of whoever is branded the common enemy of the community. Witch-finders usurp the position of God by acting as both judges and executioners. Their accusations destroy the social personality of the accused. By implication all witchcraft-eradication movements, through their very inclusion of witch-finding and accusation practices, only strengthen people's fear of witches and their acceptance of the underlying theory. They provide no viable solution or true liberation from an oppressive belief system.

Exorcism, in its popularised form in the church of Africa, can include traditional aspects of witch-finding and accusations and may lead to indiscriminate attribution of misfortunes to evil forces, and hence to intensified exorcism procedures. Consequently it can lead to horrors similar to the European witch hunts. Shorter's misgivings on this score are therefore understandable. He reminds us that although Christ practised exorcism in the case of epileptics, he did not attribute every affliction to diabolic possession. Likewise, it would be wrong for the priest-exorcist to try and win over fellow believers to his views of demon possession – a terrible prospect, considering the historical background of European demonology. Instead, Shorter (in Lagerwerf 1987:58) feels that the church should develop a more original and enduring ministry:

We should discourage interest in the spectacle of exorcism and dissociated personality in the normal context of healing and prayer over the sick. For the Christian African the world must be alive in a new sense, not with the self-orientated, depersonalizing theories of African tradition, but with the knowledge that 'the world is charged with the grandeur of God' and that all natural human realities are communications of divine love and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Without totally rejecting exorcism, Shorter suggests that the solution to wizardry should be sought in alternative measures: first, refusal to enter into discussion about the objectivity of wizardry beliefs; second, conscious relinquishment of the dualistic philosophy underlying wizardry beliefs; and third, transformation of the social world through socio-economic development and Christian community building – that is, the creation of a setting which will dispel wizardry-related fears.

David Bosch distinguishes between two different approaches to the combating of wizardry. The first essentially accepts the African traditional interpretive framework, while the second insists on changing this framework, in other words, on switching to a new paradigm. Like Shorter and Singleton (1980:23), Bosch (1987:52–60) opts for the second approach. He also refers to Andrew Wall's (1982:97–99) distinction: the first approach is based on the *indigenisation principle*, in which the Christian faith is incarnated in a particular culture; the second rests on the *pilgrim principle*, through which God in Christ transforms culture. Of course, one might ask whether these principles should be interpreted as mutually exclusive. Incarnation as envisaged by the indigenisation principle in fact includes Christ's transformation of culture. In practice at least, indigenisation seldom involves a straightforward and passive adaptation of the Christian faith to the indigenous culture. It seems to me, therefore, that we have here two principles displaying different emphases rather than an absolute antithesis.

This point is not sufficiently recognised in the categorical theoretical distinctions between the two. Bosch, for instance, classifies both the confession of witchcraft practices (described with reference to the *Shinga Postora* movement, Daneel 1974:xx) and exorcism (mainly with reference to Milingo's ministry) as belonging to the first approach. Thus the impression is created that these practices merely accept and strengthen the traditional cosmology and make no real contribution to a final solution, a paradigm shift. What is not sufficiently considered is the possibility that exorcism – and not only Milingo's kind of exorcism along European demonological lines, but also the AIC ministry – may change the traditional worldview; that exorcism in its varied manifestations in Africa may be instrumental in bringing about a paradigm shift.

What, according to Bosch, are the requirements for a paradigm shift? Firstly, Christians should help their community rid itself of the *scapegoat theory* by invoking the message of Christ, the one true 'scapegoat' who carried away the sins of this world once and for all. Secondly, Christian teaching should emphasise the *co-responsibility* of all individuals for what goes wrong in society, lest the tendency to blame a wizard for misfortune encourages a superficial understanding of conversion. Thirdly, a new understanding of *human suffering* should be fostered in order to change the philosophy which links suffering with evil and consequently imputes the practice of wizardry to the misdeeds of

others. Fourth, a fundamental *change in attitude towards magic* is required. Healing, reconciliation and mutual service should replace the tracing and elimination of alleged human causes of misfortune. Fifth, the Christian message should be proclaimed to the effect that *evil has no future*. The future lies with God. Satan and all manifestations of evil can therefore only be seen as conquered in advance by God. In this respect Bosch (1987:58–59) indicates that the church in Africa has not always managed to communicate the message of an ever-present God. The more remote God appears to be, the greater the need for magic to counteract the destructive forces of evil.

Although I agree with these requirements for a paradigm shift, the question remains how one is to convey this message effectively to a society which still by and large applies the scapegoat theory, where the belief in magic is still rife and where one is constantly confronted with outcasts, misfits and marginal figures – those already accused and stigmatised, in search of a cure or a lasting solution. What do you do with the afflicted members of families who for many generations have had a tradition of inherited wizardry? When such individuals fall ill and have dreams which are interpreted by society as call-dreams to perpetrate wizardry, they are at once stigmatised in their neighbourhood. In their appeal to the church for a solution, do we avoid talking about the objective reality of wizardry as it features in their lives for fear of giving credence to such beliefs, as Shorter would have it? Or do we confront those beliefs with the message of the one Scapegoat, Christ, and exorcise the invading spirits as part of the solution to a tradition-based problem, despite the risk of misinterpretation in certain quarters?

As regards the prophetic exorcist activities of the AICs, I have pointed out that to many adherents of the Spirit-type churches exorcism symbolises the liberating and protective function of the church, the victory of the Holy Spirit over Satan. The built-in safeguards against possible misinterpretation of this ministry were described as follows:

The ritual context within which exorcism takes place is quite different from that within which the *nganga* (the traditional 'doctor' or 'exorcist') operates. Here we have a group of people professing to be Christians who dance and sing Christian songs in the expectation of a manifestation of the Christian God's delivering power. The act of driving out the inhabiting and unwanted spirit is usually per-

formed in the name of the triune Christian God, with special emphasis on the presence of the Holy Spirit evinced in emotionalism and speaking-in-tongues. Prophets generally recognise that the act of expulsion does not imply a self-willed manipulation of divine power and that God himself is the final authority who decides whether their dramatised and symbolic action will be successful. Some of them admit failure, often with reference to God who willed otherwise. Then there is also the accompanying pastoral care and the insistence of prophets that afflicted persons themselves should pray perseveringly to be rid of troubling spirits. Thus we have a group-integrated technique with interaction between participant congregation, exorcising prophet and praying patient – all of them in action before and depending on the great Deliverer of evil powers. This is a far cry from manipulative magic, had such ministry evolved from a non-transformatory application of the *indigenisation principle* (Daneel 1974:342).

Because of these decidedly positive features of a contextualised pneumatology integral to prophetic exorcism, as well as a continual need for pastoral care in the face of the high incidence of spirit possession observed among the Shona, I support J V Taylor's (1963:211) call for 'the development of some properly safeguarded ministry of exorcism' in the church of Africa.

In the field of wizardry I have pointed out weaknesses of the prophetic ministry of medicine-finding, wizard-detection and the exorcism of *uroyi* spirits. Some prophets, for instance, concentrate on the recruitment value of these services to such an extent that they neglect pastoral care of their flock. Others exploit the fears of people who feel threatened by the powers of wizardry. In some cases the discrimination and stigmatisation caused by exposure of potential or practising witches override the Christian spirit of love and sympathetic understanding, with detrimental effects for the social status particularly of the women concerned. It was felt, however, that the positive features of the prophetic campaign against wizardry practices preponderate, in that the message of God's protection and liberation is convincingly carried into a realm frequently dominated by stark terror. The Christian message of reconciliation, moreover, is conveyed to the wizards – the outcasts and misfits of society – in a manner which provides, through the church, new hope of social rehabilitation. This is in direct opposition to traditional

belief: once a wizard always a wizard – which assumes the incontrovertibly evil nature of whoever is branded a witch or sorcerer in African society (Daneel 1974:343–347).

If we finally evaluate the significance of the AAEC's concern with environmental wizardry with due regard to Shorter's and Bosch's reservations about witchcraft beliefs and accusations and their insistence on a paradigm shift, the following observations appear relevant.

First, the AAEC prophets do not deliberately avoid discussing the objectivity of witchcraft beliefs, nor do they refute the dualistic cosmology underlying wizardry beliefs (Shorter). Most of them adhere to a culture and cosmology which experience wizardry as an existential reality, an evil to be dealt with from within Christianity. In this respect they represent the *indigenisation principle* (Bosch, Walls) but not in a manner that excludes Christian transformation.

Second, the earthkeeping prophets do in fact transform the social world through a type of Christian community building (Shorter), which provides reconciliation for the stigmatised wizard in the midst of a body of believers who know about understanding and forgiveness. In addition, accusations of earth destruction are followed by an entirely new and innovative ritual in which exorcism means an opportunity for the guilty to engage meaningfully in earth-care, the antithesis of *uroyi* against the soil. Hence, the *indigenisation principle* is augmented with the pilgrim principle, for it is through the power of the Holy Spirit, illuminating the lordship of Christ the saviour and earthkeeper, that the hold of self-seeking *uroyi* is broken.

Third, prophetic detection of environmental *uroyi* during the public confession of sins is not accompanied by an 'illusion of control over evil' (Shorter). The prophets know only too well that human sinfulness and greed will persist in this existence, that they will continue detecting ecological sins at *maporesanyika* ceremonies. This does not detract, however, from their proclamation of the message that 'evil has no future, the future lies with God' (Bosch).

Fourth, in the context of tree planting, *uroyi* accusations take the form of prophetic detection of a common evil rather than putting all the blame on one or a couple of scapegoats. Thus *uroyi* beliefs become a platform for convincingly proclaiming the seriousness of environmental

offences without the 'witch-finders' professing to pass final judgment on ecological wizards or of establishing a form of self-salvation (Shorter). Instead of creating a convenient escape from personal guilt and environmental sinfulness, both preachers and prophets tend to identify with the *uroyi*, thereby teaching co-responsibility of all individuals (Bosch) for the abuse of God's earth and arriving at a more biblical view of sin than traditional witchcraft allegations allowed.

Fifth, Bosch's requirements for a paradigm shift in terms of a new understanding of human suffering (as not necessarily linked to evil perpetrated by humans) and a breakthrough in attitudes to magic, are not entirely fulfilled in the AAEC. Yet by affirming the cross and salvific blood of Christ and accepting common guilt for earth destruction, the scapegoat theory appears to be effectively overcome. The communal 'exorcism' of evil through confession and tree planting in itself signifies transformation of the old belief system and rituals, as well as the beginnings of a paradigm shift.

Sixth, the work of the Holy Spirit is focal in the struggle against environmental evil. Does the African magical mind-set in this instance lead to a distorted pneumatology in the AICs, as some observers have suggested? Martin (1964:161) is a case in point:

In prophetic and messianic movements the prophets and messiahs 'possess the Spirit' like an impersonal power, they get hold of it in their own way, and the 'Spirit' must give utterance in a visible and audible way (glossolaly, trembling, leaps), and not in the hidden manner of the new life in Christ which is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22f). In the same way as the black messiah must be visible here and now and deliver from suffering, so the Spirit must manifest its power in visible and audible phenomena.

With reference to the Ngunza-Khaki Church, Oosthuizen (1968:124, 133) states:

The Spirit has here become the monopoly of the leader ... One of the main tasks of the prophets in this movement is to 'give' the Spirit to its members. Just as in animism the spirit is invoked by those entrusted with the task; the spirit is 'given' by man's initiative and not by God's. The central doctrine of the Holy Spirit is obscured and distorted here beyond recognition. The position of the doctrine

of the Holy Spirit in a Church indicates whether that Church is standing or falling. In a utilistic religion, such as that of the nativistic movements, 'the Spirit' is at man's disposal.

As the Shona Zionists and Apostles (the majority in the AAEC) belong to the group of movements generally characterised by Oosthuizen as nativistic and by Martin as prophetic, these criticisms also apply to the Shona Spirit-type churches. If so, I would like to point out, as stated above, that there are quite a number of built-in safeguards in AIC prophetic praxis which invalidate or counterbalance charges of an impersonal force, and therefore a false pneumatology. Terms like 'possess', 'at the disposal of' and 'giving the Spirit to others' are quite misleading and cannot generally be applied to the pneumatology of the Shona Independent Churches. Despite inconsistencies in their understanding of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, many prophets have gained sufficient insight into the work of the Holy Spirit, according to biblical norms, to be aware of the danger of misinterpretation.

Judging by the scriptural references to the presence and work of the triune God – particularly the role of Christ as healer and saviour – in *maporesanyika* ceremonies, it appears that the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the AAEC have definite, healthy Christian connotations, as opposed to animistic and magical ones. The dangers are unmistakable in view of limitations in AIC pneumatology. Yet the Spirit is believed to be the agent casting out environmental evil, sensitising the conscience of all human beings as stewards of the earth, and mobilising the mass action of earthkeeping which originates from Scripture. Does it really matter that our Independent Churches lack formal doctrines? Do any of us Christians fully comprehend the work of the Holy Spirit? Maybe it is better to feel inspired by the Spirit and engage in earth-healing praxis than to formulate a perfect pneumatology and shout the odds from the sidelines while passively allowing the environment to deteriorate. The Holy Spirit moves where it wills!