

drumbeats

sounds of zion in the cape flat

hennie pretorius

**African Initiatives in
Christian Mission 10**



UNISA

*This book is dedicated to Professor Pippin Oosthuizen
and Archbishop Thompson Mpongwana Adonis.*

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The Pew Charitable Trusts, the main sponsor of this project, is a national and international philanthropy with a special commitment to Philadelphia, and they support non-profit activities in the area of culture, education, the environment, health and human services, public policy and religion. Through their grantmaking, the Trusts seek to encourage individual development and personal achievement, cross-disciplinary problem solving and innovative, practical approaches to meeting the changing needs of a global community.

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resulted in a paucity of literature on the contribution of women to church life and church expansion. The roles of black women pioneers in African churches are of particular interest to the editors of the series.

As regards the AICs, the tendency in most of the earlier studies has been to assess AICs in terms of reaction to Western missions, separatism or protest against oppressive colonialism. As a result the missionary genius, missionary methods and missiological significance of AICs have not been studied in depth. However, the contribution of the AICs to the growth and religio-cultural footedness of Christianity in Africa is of vital importance for the development of a relevant mission theology in Africa. It is increasingly evident that in terms of growth rates, indigenised evangelisation, missionary campaigns and ecclesiastic contextualisation, the AICs are not peripheral but belong to the mainstream of African Christianity. Their contribution therefore should be evaluated as such, alongside that of the mission churches. Critical, yet open and fair-minded field studies should overcome the bias that has frequently distorted AIC studies in the past.

The ideas behind African Initiatives in Christian Mission originated in an interdisciplinary research project conceived by Professor Marthinus L Daneel. With 30 years of empirical research on AICs in Zimbabwe, Daneel gathered a team of researchers from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Malawi, and received a grant in 1994 from The Pew Charitable Trusts. Assisted by field workers, researchers set out to gather data on different facets of African initiative within various churches in southern Africa. Meeting periodically at the Department of Missiology at the University of South Africa (Unisa), the researchers reported on the work in progress and received feedback from other team members. The co-operative nature of the project was essential to its success, for the original team included members of mission churches and AICs, academics and practitioners, blacks and whites. The Research Institute for Theology and Religion at Unisa provided administrative support; and Professor Dana Robert participated as the representative of Boston University, the official host institution for the project.

Out of the project meeting emerged a decision to hold an international conference in 1997 on 'African Initiatives in Christian Mission in Southern Africa'. As well as the conference, the group decided to launch a publication series that would make the results of the project available to scholars and church people in Africa. Given the lack of research and its limitations as outlined above, the project participants decided to broaden the focus of the

series beyond southern Africa and, by implication, beyond the core group of scholars. The widest possible definition of mission underlies the series. The participant scholars agreed to deal essentially with Christian mission: the outreach of Christian faith and life in the extension of Christ's good news beyond the boundaries of ignorance, cultures, poverty, suffering or whatever obstacles obscure a clear Christian witness in the world. Nevertheless, not all contributors are missiologists and their research methodologies include phenomenological, social-anthropological, historical and distinctly non-theological approaches, or a combination of these. Yet the team feels that even if the joint venture, against the background of diverse disciplines, runs the risk of controversy and overdiversity within the series, the overall outcome will be both challenging and enriching. The qualification 'African initiative', too, is not subject to narrow definition. Black and white African theologians, for instance, are contributors in this series. Despite the predominant concern with black African initiatives, a number of studies on white missionary endeavour will be included, particularly the attempts of black African scholars to interpret the legacy of white-controlled missions, their impact on African society, and the attitudes and response of African communities to such endeavour. In many respects white and black participation in mission in Africa are two sides of the same coin, the implication being that study of one enhances understanding of the other.

On behalf of all participants in this joint research and publishing venture, we express our appreciation to our sponsors, the staff of Unisa's Research Institute for Theology and Religion, and Unisa Press; their support remains crucial in the realisation of the envisaged goals.

Series Editors: Marthinus Daneel and Dana Robert

1 Nomenclature varies on the two groups of African churches. 'Mission churches' have also been called 'Historical or Established Churches'. The abbreviation 'AICs' originally stood for 'African Independent Churches', a term which is still preferred by many scholars. In recent years, the World Council of Churches has tended to use the term 'African Initiated Churches'. In this series, different authors are free to use any of the three they choose. But in the introduction to the series the editors generally refer to 'African Initiated Churches' because the term resonates with the title 'African Initiatives in Christian Mission'.

care in the Zionist *umzi* lies in the compassionate service of healer prophets, the sharing among members of meagre resources in the face of socio-economic deprivation, and the sharing of the pain and travail of a broken existence. Herein lies the uniqueness and attraction of Zion. Herein, too, lies the challenge for the church of Africa to keep reinterpreting and reshaping its message and ministries within the ever-changing context of the religious-cultural, social and economic needs of its people.

The merits of this study, which qualify it as an outstanding contribution in the field of AIC literature, are briefly as follows: first, an overview of the history of African Christians in Cape Town and an analysis of Zionist churches in the city context add to knowledge of AICs as an *urban phenomenon*. Amongst other things, the attitudes of urban Zionist healers to the new South Africa reveal a considerable degree of scepticism about the 'new freedom' in a crime-ridden urban environment. Nevertheless, Zionist leaders on the whole accept the participation of their members in political parties and more generally, in community work. This trend portrays Zionists as more involved socio-politically than has been suggested by those observers who characterised the prophetic movements in Southern Africa as apolitical or as merely supportive of the political status quo.

Second, by shedding light on the Zionists in a specific regional context the author contributes significantly towards exploring a previously under-researched area: the AICs in the Cape Town environment.

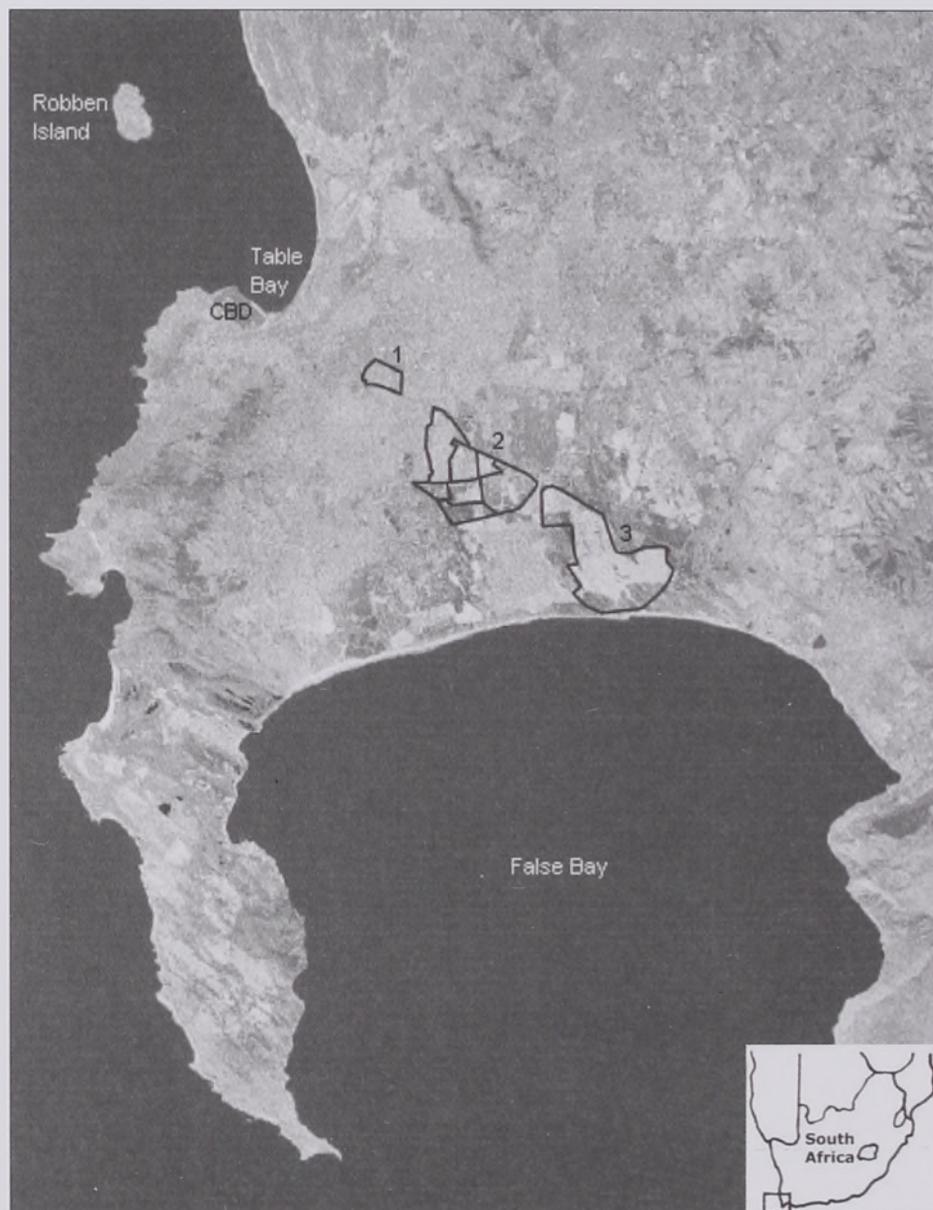
Third, an attempt to enlighten his readers about the research methodology underlying his work enables the author to provide clues about the strengths and limitations of his findings. In the presentation of empirical data one is struck by the integrity of a dedicated observer of AICs who seeks to present the bare facts as they are, without indulging in undue speculation, unwarranted generalisations and distracting sentimentality.

Fourth, in his missiological appraisal of the Zionist churches under survey, the author touches on the ever-important, yet complex, issues of 'Gospel and culture'. He convincingly illustrates the difficulties in evaluating a widely diversified phenomenon, characterised by processes of transition and tradition-related contextualisation. Yet, largely as a result of the centrality and authority of Christian Scriptures in Zionism, Pretorius concludes about the churches of the Cape Flats that 'while maintaining or adapting indigenous beliefs and forums ... they have introduced a message that is

in essence new. This message no longer appeals to the ancestors or to impersonal supernatural forces, but has a new focus of spirituality quite clearly identified with the Holy Spirit of God of whom they read in their Bibles. Zionism and traditional Xhosa religion in some ways might be similar in outward form, but are different in essence'.

This evaluation underscores and complements similar findings on the Christian nature of Zionism elsewhere in southern Africa. It also raises afresh the issue of the undeniable missionary role of AICs in spreading Christianity on the African continent and their vitally important contribution towards an enacted, if unwritten, theology of religions, integral to the process of church formation.

Marthinus Daneel (Project Coordinator)



Aerial view of

- 1 Langa
- 2 Gugulethu-Nyanga-New Crossroads-KTC-Old Crossroads-Phillipi-Brown's Farm Complex
- 3 Khayelitsha

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenal growth of the Christian churches on the African continent is an axiom in missiological circles. The African Indigenous Churches (AICs) form a striking part of this increase. Observers even view the emergence and growth of this kind of church as one that has changed the demography of world Christianity. Taking reservations on statistics into account, it has been concluded that the AICs

represent a central development of Christianity in the Africa of the 20th century. This indicates that the landscape of world Christianity is changing. There is no way we can talk of world Christianity, much less of Christianity in Africa, without taking account of this genre of AICs (Pobee & Ositelu 1998:5).

The present study is aimed at gaining deeper insight into the experience of the Christian faith of a particular group belonging to the AICs – the Zionists. It is undertaken within the ambit of the larger movement in South Africa, beyond its borders and Christianity in black Africa in general.

Besides the paramount importance of mission, there are two focal points of this study: a *profile* of specific Zionist churches and a description of the *spirit* manifested in these churches. Some clarity on these concepts is needed. By a profile I mean the outward shape and appearance of the churches, formal aspects or even their public image. I use the concept *spirit* in the sense of their characteristic quality or mood. *Ethos*, the moral values, ideas or beliefs by which a group lives, is also used in this regard while the concepts *spirituality* and *world-view* will be explored as further tools of understanding.

As for the chapter division: in the first chapter I provide a brief sketch of the broad context within which the Zionist movement originated as well as some of the research questions and aims of this study. This is followed by the research design (chapter 2). Chapter 3 gives an overview of the social history of black Christians in Cape Town. Chapter 4 offers a profile of Zion in the Cape Flats while chapter 5 is concerned with the spirit in Zion. The next chapter deals with Zionist speaking while the final one presents an interpretative reflection from a missiological perspective.

message that people found particularly apt in the new circumstances they faced. Yet twenty to thirty years later, tens of thousands of these people were pouring out again into new foundations that called themselves Christian but differed in important respects from their 'orthodox' predecessors. And the trend has continued down to this day, to the point where even the leaders of the older Churches are forced to concede the greater vigour and appeal of the new institutions.

It is precisely here that an *alternative mission* to Africa – perhaps a fairly novel idea to many – comes to the fore. 'African Independent Christianity', it has been stated, 'is perhaps the liveliest and most vital form of Christian mission in the world today, and its life takes place in categories that have very little to do with "normal" Christian pathways' (Burrows 1996:137–138). In this sense then, something new has once again emerged out of Africa: 'AICs, therefore, are the result of Christian mission, even if not planned . . . In essence they are something new which can be identified neither with the forms of traditional African religion nor with Western expressions of Christianity' (Becken 1998:7).

This book attempts to investigate some of the categories mentioned and to develop insight into Zionist churches in a black South African urban setting. The research on which the study is based was done in the African townships of the Cape Flats, a geographical region within the Cape Metropolitan Area (see aerial photograph on page xvi), to which 'non-whites' were relocated during the apartheid years. In this regard references to the 'Cape Peninsula', among others quoted in the following chapters, can be somewhat misleading. In fact, the Cape Peninsula does not include any of the large African townships.

Who are the Zionists? They are black churches with black founders, leaders and members, autonomous of any external control by missionaries, white or black, churches with an indigenous African orientation. They are churches that, as Pobee and Ositelu (1998:55) typify them, 'have no missionary "godfathers" to turn to' and therefore take responsibility for themselves. They are furthermore part of the African independent Christianity just mentioned: 'Zion forms one large group, or family, of churches in the prolific world of "African Independent Churches"' (Sundkler 1976:15). While I appreciate the provisional nature of typologies, I have suggested the following one for the movement of black independent churches in South

Africa: *Ethiopian/Indigenous spiritual* with Zion City and Zion Apostolic as the two main sub-types/*Modern revivalists* (Pretorius 1993:144–146).

In South Africa the century-old *Zionist movement* is by far the largest segment of what is alternatively known as the African Independent, Indigenous, Instituted or Initiated churches or even African International Churches (as used, among other things, for the churches of the African diaspora beyond the continent – cf. Gerloff 2000:165–184). I use the abbreviation 'AICs' throughout and have chosen 'indigenous' in order to underline the Zionists affinity to the original Xhosa culture. When referring to the 'mainline' churches, I use this term for the lack of a more suitable one to denote the Western-derived denominations and not to imply that the AICs in South Africa are still on the ecclesiastical sideline.

This indigenous group of churches originated through withdrawal from mainline churches, breaking away from existing AICs, or through spontaneous growth guided by a gifted leader. Jurgens Hendriks analyses the data on religion in South Africa provided by the 1996 Census, taking into account the merits and limitations of the census. He indicates that whereas about three-quarters of South Africa's population is Christian, 35,5 per cent of them belong to the AICs. This represents some 10,7 million South African Christians, or 43 per cent of all black Christians. Close to 20 per cent of all Christians in the country are members of the various Zionist churches (Hendriks 1999:64, 67). The growth rate of these and other spirit-type churches during the past decades justifies the conclusion that this religious movement 'has become the major force to be reckoned with in South African Christianity' (Anderson 1993:138).

Comparative statistics for the area studied are the following: 71 per cent of the inhabitants of Cape Town indicate that they are Christians; between 24 and 32 per cent of black Christians (depending on how the indication 'other' in the statistical tables is interpreted) belong to AICs – possibly 155 630 people. Approximately 17 per cent of all black Christians in the city are Zionists. The smaller black Zionist churches, the subject of this study, are represented by 60 110 members (processed statistics supplied by the Religious Demographic Research, Department of Practical Theology, University of Stellenbosch). The Zion Christian Church, the largest AIC in South Africa and one which has a considerable presence in the Cape Flats, was not included in the project. Despite manifold similarities with the

- An important work in which the AICs in the Cape Flats feature is that of M Wilson and A Mafeje: *Langa. A study of social groups in an African township* (London: OUP, 1963). The authors mention that at the time there were 30 denominations in this township including 14 AICs of which 4 were Zionists.
- In 1995 K A J van Rensburg completed an MTh dissertation for the University of Potchefstroom. It was based on interviews with 30 inmates of Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town and had as title 'Die opvattinge oor sonde, skuld, straf en verlossing onder 'n aantal Xhosa-sprekende gevangenes uit Sionistekerke in die Wes-Kaap. 'n Missiologiese studie'.
- In the same year D J Lambrechts presented a BTh dissertation to the University of Western Cape, based on questionnaires and personal interviews with 16 churches: 'A survey of some African independent churches in the Western Cape with special reference to origin, development and future prospects'.
- A more recent publication is that of L E Thomas: 'Constructing a theology of power: lessons from apartheid. Anthropological reflections on healing rituals among poor black South Africans', in *Missionalia* 1997 25:1. The article examines the religion of members of the St John's Apostolic Faith Mission in Gugulethu. In 1999 the same author followed up with the first extensive publication on an AIC (the church mentioned above) in the Cape Town area: *Under the canopy. Ritual process and spiritual resilience in South Africa* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press).

CHAPTER 2

SEARCHING FOR GOOD RESEARCH

'When you can see everything from every imaginable point of view you might begin to understand.'

'Can you?'

'No.'

– Ben Okri

... missiologists are involved in collecting data and weave threads

– Chun Chae Ok



A band of women publicly playing in the field of the Lord

missionary enterprise needs to be transformed. In this continuing process the church needs a thorough understanding of itself. The church, according to Ivan Illich (1974:10),

learns about itself by seeing itself in the mirror of public opinion, in the microscope of the social sciences. Even more the Church can learn about herself (and her essence) by seeing herself in the faith of Christian Communities. Through the eyes of the world the Church recognizes that she is doubtful, disreputable, shabby; in the eyes of the faithful, she is a mystery.

Missiology is concerned with the extraordinary manner in which the church moves beyond its familiar surroundings to ever new possibilities:

Missiology studies the growth of the Church into new peoples, the birth of the Church beyond its social boundaries; beyond the linguistic barriers within which she feels at home; beyond the poetical images in which she taught her children. The Church is led to marvel about the ever new images in which her venerable knowledge can become meaningful for the first time, just as ever new worlds are led to marvel about the new levels of meaning their traditional images can convey ... Missiology therefore is the study of the Church as surprise (p. 7).

Illich continues to give examples of how the church, grateful and surprised, took the celebration of Christmas from the Germans, dances to the glory of God from the Aztecs, while Dante made Aristotle and Plato 'marvel about never suspected divine depths into which their conceptual tools could lead' (p. 7). Likewise, the church has much to gain from Zionism: even before the outset of my research I was already surprised by the profound theological insights of illiterate or semi-literate Zionists. For example: 'God is our Father, but also our Mother who gives suck to her children'; 'A spirit which does not harmonise with the Scriptures is not the Spirit of God'; 'The difference between Christ and the ancestral spirits is that Christ has risen from the dead which they have not done'. These are but a few of the pearls gathered up from the oyster-bed of Zionist wisdom. The project promised to bring further surprises on the level of, as Illich describes it, 'never suspected divine depths' to the fore.

Owing to their dynamic, exceptional increase and growing self-assertion, the AICs generally and their majority component, the Zionists in particular, cannot be treated as a minor or inconsequential subject of missiology.

Indeed, the barriers of separation between the two major parts of Christianity in South Africa, the so-called mainline and indigenous churches, should be understood as a serious missiological issue:

Missionaries are the ones who lit the flame of Christianity in Africa, but Western-oriented missionary methods to a great extent frustrated the Christian life of Africans. Missiologists should therefore champion the cause for devising means and strategies of creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding, trust and co-operation in this connection (Masuku 1996:442).

For the last half century missiologists have indeed been busy reflecting on their task and the challenge presented by the AIC movement:

One profession in particular has been heavily involved with the movement: the science of missiology. This is a recognized academic discipline concerned with the scientific or objective study of mission, and should not be confused with active missionary approaches which aim to change other people's religions. The task of missiologists is to investigate, to describe, to analyse, to explain, to provide biblical exegesis, to assess, to provide a critique, to evaluate, and to relate each new phenomenological 'challenge' to the history and theology of mission. Since 1950 a plethora of missiological congresses on all continents has considered this fascinating African subject scientifically. Root causes of the movement have been propounded, explanatory typologies have been evolved, and some 3,000 books and articles have been published (Barrett & Padwick 1989:2).

To recapitulate: missiology, mutually supported by and supporting other social sciences, provides the theoretical framework for this study. It is implied that Zionist churches – being part of the universal church – transform the social reality in which they exist, while they themselves are transformed. Missiology is therefore the framework I use to research the Zionists of the Cape Flats.

I will now discuss the *research methodology* I employed. My contention is that the researcher requires complementary methods which provide the opportunity to see things that one cannot see when only one method is used.

Researchers representing different disciplines have used diversified approaches in the study of AICs (see Pretorius 1995:33–51; Maluleke

Cape Flats townships generally, that is, representative in the strictly quantitative sense of the word.

The choice of snowball sampling therefore renders the survey useful and the idea of a profile valid. External validity refers to the applicability of the research results outside the immediate context of the researched phenomena themselves. It refers to the possibility of applying the research results to units of analysis/phenomena beyond those actually included in the research design. Against the background of using a non-probability sampling technique, transferential validity comes into play. The question arises: Is it possible to transfer the research conclusions to other situations or persons in a way that is helpful, insightful or fruitful?

The key issue in answering the question about the transferability of research findings to a context that is similar to the original research context, is, in this case, the extent of similarity between the churches included in the survey and those excluded. The project is limited to Zionist churches. Those excluded are not only situated in contexts that are similar or even identical to those included, but *in the very same contexts*, namely the townships of the Cape Flats and the traditional Xhosa milieu. Add to this the fact that important socio-economic dimensions such as employment, housing, services, taxi violence and crime as well as the current political climate are equal. When taking these arguments into account, transferability does seem to be justified.

It is thus argued that the concept *profile*, which I use (especially in chapter 4) with reference to the group of Zionist churches in the Cape Flats that were studied, is valid and useful. It should nevertheless be borne in mind that a non-probability sampling method was used and that one must remain aware of the parameters of the findings.

Fred Wester (1987:157) makes the useful observation that, while each type of research has its own uncertainties, results of research do not stand firmly forever. Therefore, each research project can be viewed as spadework for the next. Hence many stock-taking inquiries of the survey type can be seen as preparatory for a qualitative type of research in which issues can be considered on a deeper level. These remarks are relevant here. Besides the quantitative survey's value to produce a mass of hitherto unknown information, it served as spadework for what followed on the deeper level of qualitative research.

The traditional socio-cultural context of this study is predominantly that of Southern Nguni societies, where an exceptionally high degree of linguistic and general cultural uniformity prevails. The value of data on clanship, which I include in chapter 4, is that, although not conclusive, it provides an indication of the cultural orientation of respondents. The use of clan names also offers a useful alternative to pertinent questions about ethnicity and tribal identity that may offend some respondents. The survey data further lends tentative support to the assumption that magico-religious beliefs and practices encountered during the research are either rooted in Southern Nguni worldview or in mainstream Zionist tradition. Data on clanship therefore serves as a provisional point of reference when investigating the degree of synthesis between general Zionist and specifically Southern Nguni worldview achieved among Cape Flat Zionists.

For the second phase of the project I used the *grounded theory approach* (GTA) as the main theoretical guideline without necessarily following all the prescriptions of this approach. Aiming at the description of concepts, I saw the GTA as a 'sensitising device' to the researcher, without attempting to develop a new theory. In any case, theories that lead to turning-points in the social sciences are not easily arrived at. I do not consider it necessary to embark on a detailed description of this approach since it has been well-established since 1967. (For a résumé of the procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria of the GTA see Corbin & Strauss 1990:3–21). A brief introduction and the mentioning of some distinctive traits will suffice.

Two exponents of the GTA have summarised it as follows:

Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach that was collaboratively developed by Glaser and Strauss. Its systematic techniques and procedures of analysis enable the researcher to develop a substantive theory that meets the criteria for doing 'good' science: significance, theory-observation compatibility, generalizability, reproducibility, precision, rigor, and verification. While the procedures are designed to give the analytic process precision and rigor, creativity is also an important element. For it is the latter that enables the researcher to ask pertinent questions of the data and to make the kind of comparisons that elicit from the data new insights into phenomenon and novel theoretical formulations. This approach can be used by persons of any discipline or theoretical orientation desirous of developing a grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin 1990:31–32).

But why *grounded* theory? B G Glaser and A L Strauss were dissatisfied with social inquiry gained at testing hypotheses inferred from theories. They had in mind logical-deductive theories that are 'applied' to social realities. Against this, they posed the development of 'grounded theories', grounded in the sense that they are developed step by step on the basis of data that are systematically obtained and analysed. The GTA is characterised by the fact that data are simultaneously gathered *and* analysed, in other words, empirical and theoretical activities are performed at the same time. The GTA is cyclical in the sense that data collection, analysis and reflection on observation and analysis continuously interact with one another (Wester 1987:45, 65). This process is repeated until a pattern comes to the fore. The GTA is thus also referred to as the *constant comparative method* in which suitable methods, grounded in the unique character of the situation and the specific interaction between researcher and the researched are developed in interaction with the communities that are studied.

Grounded theory is more than a sociological approach. It can be used by persons of many disciplines, including theology and missiology. Researchers from different disciplines will be interested in different phenomena, even viewing the same phenomenon differently because of divergence in disciplinary perspectives and interests. Yet, the GTA can provide each researcher with procedures for analysing data that will lead to theory useful to that discipline (Strauss & Corbin 1990:26–27). In this regard Klippies Kritzinger's (1995:379) advice should be heeded: 'insider's perspectives' and 'grounded theory'-type approaches are ways of going about missiology that are likely to be the best safeguard against the imposition of categories or frameworks from missiology.

For the third phase of the project I attempted to examine the Zionists' speaking in order to arrive at greater insight. In doing this, I did not move to entirely new ground,¹ although the methods employed did have novel elements. I paid attention to Zionist speaking with the assumption that it serves as a sensitive barometer of peoples' beliefs, while at the same time, it helps to create and affirm these very beliefs (cf. Abrahamson 1992:288). Such an approach is in line with the general aim of the whole project to discover, describe and interact with the Zionists' experience of their faith. An examination of their speaking seemed promising to illuminate their ethos, spirituality and theology – three major concerns of the research project.

During the research process it soon became clear that to attend to preaching alone as one of the forms of Zionist speaking, would be to miss the opportunity to examine the broader and richer field of Zionist speaking. The way I then went about it was to investigate Zionist speaking in worship services against the backdrop of speaking at a traditional Xhosa ritual associated with labour migrancy, in particular a ritual beer drink called *umsindleko* ('a provision'). In this regard James Kiernan (1990:77) has pointed out that a 'religious meeting is essentially an exercise in communicative work and, sociologically, is an event of the same order as a drinking feast'.

Patrick McAllister (1991:134), who provided me with useful tools in this respect, explains why these rituals and the associated oratory reflect the migrant's experience of reality adequately:

There are a number of ritual actions performed by and for migrant workers each time they leave for work and again on their return . . . These rituals attempt, among other things, to ensure that the migrant interprets his experience 'correctly' – that is, as a means designed to serve the rural home. They reinforce his identity as a Red Xhosa and strengthen his commitment to a Red lifestyle and values. Resistance to incorporation [into the Southern African political economy] is thus expressed in terms of Xhosa tradition, affirming the moral paramountcy of a reality other than that of the workplace.

McAllister (p. 138) argues that beer drinks 'provide a "frame" within which members of society are able to portray their socio-cultural system, to reflect upon and reaffirm it'. Experience of observing and participating in Zionist services gave me much reason to assume that the parallels between the beer drink and the Zionist service could provide a rewarding basis of investigation. In this regard it should be noted that in practice the Zionists clearly distance themselves from beer drinks. I see these services as presenting such 'frames' within which the Zionists' view of their ever-changing reality is accommodated. The knowledge that Christians in rural areas, and this includes Zionists, have a modified form of the *umsindleko* in which speaking likewise takes a prominent place (Olivier 1990:262–263), encouraged me to use this approach.

A more ambitious effort than mine to understand Zionist speaking would embrace an inquiry into other possible resemblances to, and origins of, Zionist speaking. Here I have in mind, for example, Methodist preachers, women's *manyanos* ('church unions') and revivalists, as well as political,

trade union and other speaking. It would also include other forms of Zionist speaking such as prayers, hymns, disputes and testimonies.

As a field of inquiry the *ethnography of communication* or the ethnography of speaking, as it was originally called, is, according to Evelyn Jacob, one of the fivefold divisions of qualitative research traditions (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:61, 66). I made use of this approach to research the speaking of the Zionists of the Cape Flats.

Valuable guidelines for the study of communication within a 'speech community' are provided by McAllister, using the ethnography of communication approach. McAllister (1986:11–15) describes such a community as a group of people sharing rules of speaking and not necessarily all the speakers of a particular language or dialect. He proposes the following units of analysis which I freely apply to the Zionist speech community: the *speech situation* – the general context in which communication occurs; the *speech event* – a particular discourse in a speech situation which includes a specific content and form of messages as well as paralinguistic features; *speech acts* – the units of which a speech event is composed, including the genre used, the topic or referential focus, the setting and the purpose or function of the event, the act sequence, rules for interaction and the norms of interpretation.

McAllister (1981:42–46) indicates a number of the more important characteristics of the Xhosa speaking he researched. He affirms that 'the basic unit of analysis is a community or social group, not a particular language or dialect. To discover the rules of communication within such a community involves looking at how people speak, what they say, who they say it to, what they speak about and for what purpose, in relation to other communicative acts and events' (p. 11).

I consider and analyse Zionist services as social performances in which language, both spoken and sung, is prominent. As much of the speaking at a Zionist service is formal, it may be classified as public oratory, in the sense of the art of making speeches, or rhetoric, the use of words impressively in speech. *Paralanguage*, the 'significant uses of the voice, body, and face in spoken discourse' (Cook 1990:157), is a related term.

For the purposes of this study it is important to pay special attention to the content, the 'what', of the speaking, assuming that this element provides valuable clues for the identification of dimensions of a rudimentary Zionist

theology (which could contribute to one of the aims of the project). Within the ambit of the ethnography of communication I therefore concentrated on the 'referential focus' of Zionists speaking in an attempt to uncover the themes that are most conspicuously present or absent.

Thus the three major phases of the project are the survey, the use of the GTA and of the ethnography of communication.

As far as the role of *participatory observation* is concerned, I agree with the following view of Wester (1987:81): participatory observation is not in the first instance a well-defined method but rather a research strategy. All social-scientific inquiries are in fact forms of participatory observation, since one always uses one's own experiences and shared meanings when interpreting people's behaviour. Because behaviour always has to be interpreted, observation implies participation.

Participatory observation should be distinguished from different forms of participatory or action research. Participatory research has been much debated (cf. Garbers 1996:292). Its main aim, according to Derek Mulenga (1994:1), is 'the active involvement of oppressed and disenfranchised people in the collective investigation of reality *in order to transform it*'. This approach has the explicit aim of addressing the power relations between the researcher and the researched, to draw the latter into the whole research process and to have them reap some actual benefit from the research. Whether most projects of this nature do indeed meet their claim that they contribute significantly and lastingly to transform social reality, remains open to discussion. Besides, the impression that all research that does not actively seek to 'shift power to the oppressed' is not really relevant or worthwhile, should be challenged.

Whatever the merits and demerits of participatory research might be, it does raise issues to which all social researchers should attend. It at least sensitises one to the interests of the *researched* and not only to those of the researcher. This aspect is of great importance for the current study in which Zionists are involved. It has been asserted that an academic approach to research should be understandable and meaningful to the communities themselves: 'Far too little of our sophisticated academic research ever reaches the religious communities we study, which means that we actually do research "on people" or "behind their backs", without helping them to understand themselves better and without learning from them which important issues need to be researched' (Kritzinger 1995:374). Apart from

all other considerations, basic democratic values require that where people are involved in any process, they at least have the right not to be merely treated as 'objects', but to be recognised in the process in some or other manner (Garbers 1996:270).

What can the researched gain from the current project? At the outset of the project on Zionists of the Cape Flats townships I envisaged a kind of short 'report' in Xhosa, besides the larger academic one in English, *Gubu-gubu, gubu-gubu, litsho igubu lamaZiyoni eKapa*. Why? First, because of the many erroneous perceptions about Zionists that exist. The fact is that the public image of AICs in general, but Zionists in particular, is negative and distorted. All efforts to restore a balanced picture of Zionism should be welcomed. In the second place, the self-image of Zionists is enhanced. My previous research has convinced me that especially when reports are understandable to them, Zionists highly appreciate being recognised in this manner. The 'writing down' of their histories, practices and ideas advances their standing as part of broader Christianity. Third, practical involvement with these churches shows that apart from constructive elements of Zionist theology and ethos, there are also elements that some of them find highly dubious, unsatisfactory or even unbiblical (quite apart from what outsider opinions might be).

In the Xhosa edition an effort is made to address some of these and other issues in an engaging, challenging and pastoral type of publication. Although each such effort is a drop in the ocean, it could contribute towards the Zionists and the universal church drawing closer to each other. Finally, as Robert Schreiter (1985:42) has indicated, this 'move from analysis to communication' includes the possibility that the availability of the results of a project could contribute to the development of a local theology by a community of believers.

The value of research results for the researched should be assessed in the light of the marginalised position of Zionists on the church scene and in society generally. It is in the interest of all AICs, but especially of Zionists, that greater understanding on the part of outsiders as well as self-understanding be achieved. A prominent spokesperson for these churches identified the problem as follows: 'The future of Christianity in Africa lies in the hands of the AICs. It is for them to set their homes in order, so that they can welcome in their midst the 'other brethren' [the mainline churches] – when they come' (Makhubu 1988:104–105). Therefore, while at least the local Zionists stand

to gain from the current project, it should also be appreciated that they, as researched people, participate in the research process and in a sense become co-researchers. In a way they are the expert interpreters of their own life situation.

Hugo (1990:vii–viii) insists that it is critical to the evaluation of any project to know not only the methods used, but also the context in which it was undertaken. The full research process has to be disclosed. A summary which gives an impression of how the empirical research was conducted is given in Appendix A.

Part of the research process that is important but not always obvious and often quite subtle is the fact that the researcher enters the field of study with certain *presuppositions*. Although one does not always realise how they can colour one's approach, their presence and influence cannot be escaped. The researcher should always be aware of this phenomenon and thus articulate his or her own theories, conceptualisations and categories as clearly as possible throughout the research process.

To start with, some presuppositions from different perspectives are attended to. As for the theological dimension: there is a 'Zionist way of seeing reality', Zionists do have an implicit and incipient theology, a system or interpretation of the foundations of their religious belief, as well as a concomitant ethos. It is furthermore presupposed that whereas Zionist theology is usually seen in terms of heterodoxy (differing beliefs), it should not be assessed in terms of orthodoxy (correct beliefs), but rather in terms of orthosynesis (right understanding). Orthosynesis implies a willingness to and an 'attempt to come to a right understanding (orthosynesis) of a movement – both in its own terms, and in terms of its relationship to historic Christianity in its widest sense, and based on a real concern to discern theological truth' (Thompson 1987:21).

A missiological dimension can be added: although underdocumented, Zionist initiatives in Christian mission play a significant role in the planting of the Christian church and the expansion of Christianity in the African continent. One of the functions of missiology is to reflect critically on the witness of the church, in this case the Zionist churches. The manner in which they relate to their environment provides some indication of what their missionary witness is.

At the risk of being repetitive, the presupposition is made in terms of the GTA that the world of any group can be reconstructed in a grounded theory, 'the social organization of the world is integrated and the job for the grounded theorist is to discover it' (quoted in Wester 1987:62).

I gratefully appreciate that interaction with certain collaborators has significantly advanced the design and the performance of the project. Still, it is in accordance with the GTA to presuppose that the researcher him- or herself is the most important research tool, indeed, a quality-enhancing methodological input. In this regard A Strauss and J Corbin's (1990:27–28) remarks have shown what vital component of the grounded theory method creativity is:

Creativity manifests itself in the ability of the researcher to aptly name categories; and also to let the mind wander and to let the free associations that are necessary for generating stimulating questions, and for coming up with the comparisons that led to discovery. The comparisons sensitize the researcher ... enabling him or her to recognize potential categories, and identify relevant conditions and consequences when they appear in the data.

Theoretical sensitivity, the ability to recognise creatively what is important in data and to give meaning to it, represents a critical aspect of the GTA. This ability comes from two sources: from being well grounded in the technical literature as well as from professional and personal experience. 'You bring this complex knowledge into the research situation. However, theoretical sensitivity is also required during the research process through continual interactions with the data – through your collection and analysis of the data' (pp. 46–47).

A few issues concerning *practical aspects* of the research call for comment. The first is the image of the researcher. Besides all the usual factors which come into play in most research situations, additional problems could arise when intercultural research, in this case heterogeneous Western and Xhosa cultures, is undertaken. Not only language and cultural differences but also the socio-political realities in South Africa could lead the black respondent to eye the white researcher with suspicion:

On the every-day level of communication he [the researcher] is much more readily perceived as the informer attempting to gain access to inside information. He is almost comparable to the 'enemy within the gates' ... as somebody who becomes familiar with the internal matters of

a group but who maintains outside affiliations and loyalties. Black communities have become used to the informer, and there are various ways of keeping him happy by feeding him with bogus 'information' (quoted by Mouton & Marais 1994:83).

Most fortunately this mistrust has been reduced tremendously in the South Africa of today. As for the current project, I had some valuable advantages: of having been exposed to Xhosa culture and to Zionist churches on a continuous basis for more than three decades; of speaking the vernacular; and of having the image of serving the interests of the church and academic communities and not, for example, those of business, the state or some or other bureaucracy. In particular, my involvement for seven years as a lecturer at the Sokhanya Bible School, located at various points in the Cape Flats townships, has prepared the way for constructive relationships. Over an extended period I was thus in a position to enjoy the confidence of a large number of the respondents. This brought about spontaneity on their side and sufficient trust to raise even thorny issues in my presence.

AIC leaders have much to be critical of, and even skeptical about, as regards the writing on their churches. Paul Makhubu (1988, Introduction) has identified three categories of writers on AICs: those who show no interest in these churches once they have written a book or obtained a degree; those who are prompted by 'sincere love and interest', and a number of observers who have come to realise the importance of the AICs as part of the ecumenical obligation of the church. I trust that my research contribution will be rated in terms of the latter two categories.

In this regard I was very fortunate not to share the experiences of most people, both black and white, who are engaged in research activities with AICs. Researchers are, according to Tobias Masuku (1996:441, 446-447), faced with the problem of having to overcome the barriers of the indigenous churches' anger at, mistrust of, tension, resistance and suspicion towards establishment institutions such as 'mission churches, universities, [and] research institutions'.

In spite of what has just been stated, it is most important to heed Tinyiko Maluleke's advice that white researchers of indigenous churches should identify genuine shortcomings: 'The very fact that the researchers and the methods are overwhelmingly "White" whilst the researched are overwhelmingly Black is a serious methodological issue needing considered attention and not cliché-type excuses'. Black theologians too 'must begin to reflect

seriously on their silence and absence from the type of grass-roots research represented in AIC scholarship' (Maluleke 1996:43). Later Maluleke (1997:18) elaborated: 'by and large, authoritative AIC scholars in this century have been overwhelmingly white [missionaries], with Africans themselves taking a back seat. But African silence on AICs may be a *loaded* and *eloquent* one, needing to be decoded and reflected upon.'

The constructive relationships mentioned caused me to have to weigh the risks and benefits of *initially* selecting respondents with whom I already had good to very good rapport. The benefits seemed to outweigh the risks, so I proceeded being aware of my role and mission to gather, analyse and interpret valid and reliable data.

Nevertheless, despite intensive involvement, sustained participation and friendships with Zionists, I fully realise that I remain an outsider and that the final product of my research will be inadequate in many ways. While looking forward to the time when an insider AIC scholar from the local environment of the Cape Flats will have the chance to undertake a kindred project – as has happened, for example, in the case of Professor Chris Oshun of Nigeria – my quest is to keep on searching for good research.

Note

- 1 • A classic work in this regard is that of H W Turner: *Profile through preaching* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1965). The author analysed some 8 000 sermon texts of a West African independent church, acknowledging the limitation that the content of sermons may have slight relation to texts from which they start.
- In an unpublished report, 'Skrifgebruik in die onafhanklike Afrika kerke' (1992), the editor, B Müller, discusses the use of the Bible in 37 sermons delivered in AICs in KwaZulu-Natal. He mentions that from the start the research team was confronted with problems: the material was at best 'second hand' being comprised of written, edited translations of oral events; a tremendous cultural gap existed between the research team and the material with which it was dealing.
- S W D Dube recorded and analysed 30 sermons of three (non-Zionist) AICs in KwaZulu-Natal: 'Text and context in Afro-Christian preaching', in G Lademann-Priemer (ed), *Traditional religion and Christian faith. Culture clash and culture change* (Ammersbek bei Hamburg: Verlag an der Lottbek, 1993).
- In 1995 P Naudé presents a case study in oral theology: *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa* (New York: Edwin Mellen). His interest was to distill a primary creedal formulation implicitly present in some transcribed and translated hymns sung in a small Zionist congregation in rural Venda (Northern Province). See T Maluleke's valuable critique of this publication: *Missionalia* (24(1):101–102).

BLACK CHRISTIANS IN CAPE TOWN HISTORY

*Respect for persons and a concern for history go
together*

– Martin Versveld

A major focus of this book is the presence of Zionist churches in the Cape Flats. The people belonging to these churches were, and still are, sociologically speaking, not only part of the black population of Cape Town but also of the Christian churches of this city. A social phenomenon – such as the Zionist movement – can only be understood historically. The specific broader structural conditions affecting the phenomenon of central interest may include economic conditions, cultural values, political trends and social movements (Corbin & Strauss 1990:11, 19).

Therefore the Zionists, together with other black Christians (black being used as referring to people who have Bantu languages as their mother tongue), have to be located in a set of historical circumstances and events in order to gain a more comprehensive insight into the movement. The ideal will be not only to relate the phenomenon in a general manner to the macro-social conditions, but also to make specific connections between the two (cf. Strauss & Corbin 1990: 161, 166–167). In this and the next chapter I attempt to note some of these connections.

Elsewhere I have reviewed historiographical developments affecting the study of AICs in South Africa, concluding that a 'gigantic task awaits AIC historiography' (Pretorius 1995:128). In a related publication Kenneth Ross (1997:97) emphasised the significance of the historical dimension of writing theology in Africa:

Theology is essentially a dialogue between the biblical text and the vernacular world in Africa. Certainly, this is a rich and dynamic field. However, it is one where little attention tends to be paid to the concrete historical circumstances of the believing community within which this

dialogue occurs. A 'faith and culture' approach tends to posit an engagement between a static religious entity and a timeless sphere of culture. What is missed here is the fact that the community in which the meeting between Christian faith and traditional culture takes place is a community that is moving through a particular history. This offers a source for doing theology that has so far rarely been tapped: the history of the Christian communities in Africa as they have responded to the times through which they have lived. It is precisely within the dynamic history of the encounter of African peoples with Christian faith, amidst social change that African cultural identity can be properly understood in theological terms.

Here I do not survey the history of the AICs or the narrower Zionist movement in the Cape Town environment or even the history of a particular Zionist church, however necessary such an undertaking might be, in the light of a dearth of research on Zionists in this area. Neither do I trace the activities of the Christian mission in Cape Town. I rather attempt a selection and interpretation of elements of 'the times through which they have lived', the currents that shaped the histories of the black Christians of Cape Town generally and later also the Zionists, the social changes through which they have gone over a period of more than three centuries.

The particular history with which I am concerned here is that of part of the port city of Cape Town situated close to the confluence of the Indian and Atlantic oceans on the southern coast of the African continent. Specific attention will be drawn to some of the most salient turning points in Cape Town's history which exerted a decisive influence on that part of the population that is of interest: the black Christians and in particular the Xhosa-speaking people, among whom the Zionists are currently fairly prominent. This chapter is thus concerned with the urban experience of black Christians, focusing on the Zionists, a section of the whole community which has so far been relatively neglected in historical study, especially when one takes the number of people involved – possibly as many as 100 000 – into account.

In spite of the urban focus, the rural side of the coin cannot be ignored. Christopher Saunders (1992:24) has drawn attention to the distant Cape Town hinterland: 'Cape Town . . . has a number of hinterlands: not only the nearby Boland and Swartland areas from which there has been in-migration for the last two centuries [mainly 'coloured' or people of mixed race], but also the distant Ciskei and Transkei, which the bulk of the relatively recently

arrived African migrants left to move to the city, some for short periods but others permanently.' The interaction between the City of Cape Town and the former Transkei and Ciskei, which today form part of the Eastern Cape Province and is referred to as Xhosaland (*emaXhoseni*), is not to be overlooked, even in a short descriptive outline such as this.

The arrival of blacks in the Mother City

With reference to the 'godlike majesty' of Table Mountain, a perceptive black journalist (Matshikiza 1998:22) has given the following contemporary description of the 'ugly side of the fairest Cape':

The mountain stands like a huge, indifferent moderator between the conflicting worlds of Cape Town. Its face is turned towards the open sea, with paradise – the playground of lush, white houses, the business district and the Waterfront – dribbling down its chest.

The back of the mountain is like the dark side of the moon. Athlone, Manenberg, Guguletu, Langa (the sun), Nyanga (the moon), Mitchell's Plain and Khayelitsha all huddle sullenly behind the mountain's back.

If you're a back-of-the-mountain person, you don't have much truck with front-of-the-mountain people, except in the case of such unavoidable matters as work. Apart from that, you don't even bring each other into your conversations, if you can help it.

How did this gorge between 'paradise and the dark side of the moon' come into being? More particularly, what was the history of the origins of the black section, especially the Xhosa-speaking population? What turning-points in the city's history had definitive influence on them? And where and since when do the Zionists feature? I now present an outline of these issues.

'Kaaapstad' was founded by Jan van Riebeeck in 1652 for the Dutch East India Company and is therefore known as the Mother City. 'By 1660, all the major language groups of the world, African (Bantu and Khoisan), Indo-European, and Malayo-Polynesian were represented in the windswept peninsula near the southernmost tip of Africa' (Shell 1994:xxv).

From the eighteenth century onwards the port at Table Bay gradually became the epicentre of a large region, often known as the Western Cape, embracing the Karoo and reaching towards the north. It was this region's

main marketplace and chief point of contact with the world outside. The busy port was vital for the provision of fresh produce and repairs to hundreds of visiting ships each year, in addition to the supplies and a place of recuperation for their military and naval component. From early in the eighteenth century European conquest and colonisation, first Dutch then English, moved inland from Cape Town. By the mid-nineteenth century the whole Western Cape region had been brought 'under formal white rule and the dispossession of indigenous people was almost complete' (Saunders 1990:136). The colonisation of the more distant Xhosa-speaking hinterland, the later Ciskei and Transkei, was completed with the annexation of Pondoland in 1894.

In the meantime a 'dynamic in most churches at the Cape ... was a zeal for Christian missions. By the early nineteenth century South Africa had become one of the most intensively "occupied" fields of Christian mission in the world' (Elphick 1997:3). Janet Hodgson's (Hodgson 1997:87; cf. Pauw 1975:18–26) description of the Christian beginnings among the Xhosa concludes:

Throughout the nineteenth century, the religious interplay between the Xhosa and missionary conceptions was intimately connected to political and socio-economic developments in the region. But whereas the Xhosa became increasingly oppressed by white domination in their physical lives, spiritually they found a measure of liberation in that they were inspired to create new ways of expressing their Christian faith that resonated with the totality of their African experience.

These developments took place mainly in the rural areas – with a few interesting exceptions, such as the founding in 1858 of Zonnebloem College in Cape Town for the children of African chiefs. Robert Schell (1994:356) stated that 'urban Christian missions in South Africa, both English and Dutch, were almost total failures until well into the nineteenth century'. In the light of this and similar findings, what happened when the Xhosa, presumably including many Christians, started to come to Cape Town in large numbers?

When he arrived at the shores of Table Bay, van Riebeeck found a native people – the San. Their descendants were to become one of the components of the 'Cape coloured people' and became a source of coerced labour for the settlers. As early as the 1680s the Dutch seriously explored, but never tapped, another potential source of labour: slaving among the distant Xhosa

(p. 26). The solution to the problem of labour shortage was to come from other regions of the continent and even further afield, notably through the oceanic slave trade.

Since the eighteenth century the presence of blacks in Cape Town and environs was, and still is, closely linked to economic changes. The port and its rural hinterland required labour, albeit to a fluctuating degree.

The first as well as the last slaves imported to the Cape were Africans. During the first decade of the colony several hundred slaves from West and Central Africa were imported. After 1706 the slave trade turned to the Indian Ocean Basin, while finally becoming re-Africanised between 1780 and 1808, mostly drawing slaves from the east African coast and Madagascar. During the slave period a large portion of Cape Town's population were slaves. In 1731, for example, more than half of the people of the town and more than three quarters of those in the wider Cape Peninsula were slaves. Indeed: '[t]he port was ... both a depot for the oceanic slave trade and the main distribution center for all the Cape's imported slaves' (p. 139; cf. 41, 42, 65, 137, 404). Enslavement of Bantu-speaking Africans from within the present South Africa was extremely rare (Saunders 1980:16).

The slave period was significant not only in terms of the formation of the highly heterogeneous population and cultures of Cape Town, but also in that the earliest profile of racial and ethnic attitudes and colonial identities were moulded at this time. Shell (pp. 395; cf. 409, 414) argued in his *Children of bondage*: 'Slavery, not the frontier and certainly not the process of industrialization, shaped South Africa.'

Towards 1840 a situation prevailed which foreshadowed the current 'front-of-the mountain' and 'back-of-the mountain' people: 'For Cape Town was rapidly becoming two towns. Behind and between the neat grid of streets of the colonial town was a maze of steegs – lanes, alleys, squares and culs de sac ... even the more prestigious areas contained slum properties ... Squatting was already a common problem' (Worden, van Heyningen & Bickford-Smith 1998:120).

In the meantime a group of Mfengu, who were Xhosa-speaking, had settled in Cape Town from at least the late 1830s, some with their wives and families. This small permanent black community in the 1840s and 1850s was enlarged in 1857 when some 2 000 Xhosa (rather than Mfengu) arrived in the aftermath of the disastrous cattle killing of 1856-1857. It is unknown

how many remained permanently in the Mother City. While some were sent to farming districts, others were employed on public works in the town, such as the construction of roads, railways and buildings. From 1860 they helped to build the new harbour, continuing to work there when it was completed (Saunders 1980:18–22; Worden, van Heyningen & Bickford-Smith 1998:139).

The Dutch already used Robben Island in Table Bay, among others, to imprison convicts, including political ones. Chiefs who resisted the British annexation of Xhosaland in the 1850s were banished to the island. This included those who were believed to have supported the cattle killing (Worden, Van Heyningen & Bickford-Smith 1998:139).

The next significant influx of Xhosa occurred due to the Cape Xhosa war of 1877–1878. Nearly 4 000 blacks from Transkei and Ciskei who had been caught up in the war were transported to the Western Cape by the government. At least some 1 320 of them (including women and children) were employed in Cape Town itself, the other in surrounding districts and elsewhere. Later voices were raised that a location should be established in Cape Town due to the living conditions of overcrowding and disease of those who remained when many of these people deserted the farms and returned to Xhosaland. The privileged Capetonians, however, were reluctant to accept the implications of a sizeable resident married black population.

So new migrants were found: a few hundred Berg Damara from Namibia and, more significantly, 2 401 men from Mozambique who arrived between 1879 and 1882. It was at this time that the white inhabitants first began to see the black population as 'a problem' (Saunders 1980:24–29). Saunders argues that 'in the 1880s Cape Town underwent a transition from being a class-based society with ethnic undertones to one based primarily on race, where poor whites were seen to be deserving poor, and poor blacks not' (Saunders 1992:32; cf. Worden, van Heyningen & Bickford-Smith 1998:220).

Besides the few hundreds of blacks squatting on a tract of government land on the slopes of Devil's Peak, District Six, by the mid-1890s, there were two other large concentrations: a few hundred lived on top of Table Mountain, working on a new reservoir, and an even larger number laboured on the docks. By 1900 the black population of greater Cape Town had increased to about 10 000 – the majority being migrants from Xhosaland. Of the country's four major harbour towns, the Mother City offered the highest wages and conditions of work preferable to those at other ports. The great rinderpest

epidemic of 1896–1897 contributed to the migration to Cape Town (Saunders 1980:31–32).

The 'mineral revolution' that followed the discovery of diamonds and that of gold on the Rand, as well as the subsequent Anglo-Boer War, brought something of a boom to the port. By the turn of the nineteenth century migratory labour of unskilled workers had become established in Cape Town, although some blacks chose to settle. A pattern was emerging: 'Foremost was concern for labour supply in an expanding Cape economy: to segregate the workers and pay them as little as possible became part of the system' (Bickford-Smith 1980:85–86). As for the Cape Town docks, Transkei and Ciskei were the main areas for recruiting labour. At the time the demand for labour was met by adverse conditions in Xhosaland: 'Apart from new consumption requirements, growth in population, bad harvests, the need to have cash to pay taxes and deliberative coercive measures by the Cape Government, would all contribute to producing a potential migrant population' (pp. 88–89).

In spite of the highly cosmopolitan population of Cape Town at the time, group identity of the migrant labourers, who were mainly from Xhosaland, was alive:

Ethnic identity and shared migrancy could only strengthen, rather than undermine, the group consciousness of such African workers. This consciousness was, by 1903, reinforced by participation in communal dances and expressed in songs that talked not just of rural life . . . but now also of life in the docks and the hard lot of Africans in Cape Town (Bickford-Smith 1994:89).

The outbreak of the bubonic plague in 1901 confirmed the cherished image of 'the Africans as uncivilised, impermanent immigrants, no real part of the city, [which] had been impressing itself on the minds of Cape Town citizens for some years past' (van Heyningen 1981:94). Owing to the slum conditions in which some blacks were living, the epidemic indeed rapidly established itself in the black community. The public now agitated to have the problem solved by housing the blacks in a location compound on the Cape Flats, a precedent having been set by migrants housed in barracks at the Cape Town harbour. The eventual decision to compound the blacks arose from more than simple racism: 'It was the result of a complex blend of prejudice, fear, expediency and paternalism' (van Heyningen 1981:95). For nearly a century urban segregation would be the order of the day.

However, the establishment of Ndabeni location (eight kilometres out of town) met resistance for various reasons: primitive living conditions, overcrowding, rigorous control and the lack of scope for self-advancement. 'Moreover, the relatively few permanent residents, many of whom were Christian and had some education, were largely outnumbered by a floating population of migrants (*amagoduka*) who, after staying perhaps six months returned to their homes in the eastern Cape or Transkei' (Saunders 1979:176).

Cape Town drew thousands of rural blacks due to the prosperity that followed in the wake of World War I. In 1918, however, Spanish influenza – the worst of many serious epidemics in the history of the Mother City – broke out causing more than 6 000 deaths. Once again, the appalling conditions prevalent at Ndabeni and the Docks Location were highlighted. This situation contributed to the eventual closure of the first official location for blacks. The site later became an industrial estate while Langa opened in 1927 as the only official location for blacks.

The advent of Zion



Post-service rejoicing in the Lord at Macassar's shacklands

All the events described above, with the exception of those mentioned in the last paragraph, took place before Zionism had arrived in South Africa. By the turn of the century various Christian denominations had been well established among the Xhosa, predominantly in their hinterland. The type of independent churches usually referred to as 'Ethiopian' had enjoyed a separate existence since the 1880s. By 1910, when Cape Town became the parliamentary heart of the new Union of South Africa, the formation of AICs in the country had already entered 'a second, a Zionist phase, as Africans began to fashion traditions markedly more Pentecostal, and more African, than those of the churches they left behind' (Elphick 1997:6; for a brief overview of the history of South African Zionism see Pretorius & Jafta 1997:216–219).

The Zionist churches were first located in Natal and Transvaal, particularly in the Witwatersrand urban conglomerate where many of them originated and grew more 'than in any other urban area in the whole of Africa' (Daneel 1987:102; cf. Sundkler 1961:48–50; Sundkler 1976:13 sq). Only since the 1930s did a few of them exist in the Transkei, right in the Xhosa heartland, becoming more conspicuous there and in the Ciskei in the 1950s (De Wet 1994:152–153). It took some time before black Zionists – who have, besides the Old Testament, very little affinity to Jewish Zionism – arrived in Cape Town from the northern and eastern parts of South Africa.

Research in this regard is seriously hampered by the lack of sources, both oral and written. What can be safely concluded from the latter is that by mid-century there was a Zionist presence in Langa (Hammond-Tooke 1948:96, 109). Moreover, included in the list of ten churches applying for sites at the establishment of Langa, there appears, besides three Ethiopian churches, the name of a single Zionist church, the Zion Baptist Church (Kondlo 1990:23–24). The earliest oral source I found also goes back to 1927 when the Zion City Apostolic Church of South Africa was introduced to Cape Town (see chapter 5). For the few following decades, blacks living in Cape Town were concentrated at Langa, the so-called model location. It is possibly here where Zionism had its origin in this region.

Until the 1940s African women did not move to Cape Town in large numbers. Since this date and later they have played an important role in the making of the locations, subsequent townships as well as the squatter settlements on the periphery of the built-up areas (Saunders 1992:33). African women's Christian organisations, the *manyanos*, were part of this influx. For example,

as early as 1930, some 200 of them, Methodists in this case, held their annual district meeting at Ndabeni. The considerable social and political impact of the wider *manyano* movement (which certainly included Zionists) has been described as follows:

for all their contradictions and occasional conservative tendencies, these groups 'were and remain a vital element' in the maintenance and rejuvenation of their communities. Even while 'generally accepting a gender ideology based on women's subordination to men', such groups 'gave women crucial support to enhance their *de facto* autonomy from men.' They 'helped to provide a sense of direction, accomplishment and pride' for women in 'what was an otherwise demoralising and deteriorating socio-economic setting' (Gaitskell 1997:267; cf. 259).

World War II drew African migrants to the Mother City to look for work at this time of relative prosperity. Although Langa's growth was rapid, the African population of greater Cape Town grew even faster. In the early 1950s their settlements could be found in the townships, the old locations (such as Luyolo in Simonstown), alongside whites and 'coloureds' (Woodstock and Athlone), in shanty towns and in the developing site-and-service townships such as Nyanga. These settlements were scattered, ranging from the large numbers of recently arrived workers, to smaller groups of permanent residents. In this complex setting, living conditions were made even more difficult by the bitter divisions among different interest groups (Cameron 1988:151-153).

As far as the authorities were concerned, two factors should be distinguished regarding the African settlement in the city: the clearance of the sprawling squatter areas with their slum conditions and the compulsory segregation of people of different colours:

Ndabeni, Langa and Nyanga were all begun because people were living in squalor and the medical authorities were pressing for slum clearance, but they were also planned as *segregated* areas, to which Africans would be confined. It was stated that the areas set aside for African occupation would be *permanently* assigned to them, but in fact they have been required repeatedly to move (Wilson & Mafeje 1963:5).

The implementation of the Group Areas Act of 1950 by the Nationalist Party government, soon involving a complicated permit system, brought matters to a head. Central control was imposed over Cape Town, as over other cities.

'Apartheid also included the Nationalists' fantasy of ridding the entire western Cape of Africans, who would become citizens of their own homelands, or bantustans' (Bickford-Smith, van Heyningen & Worden 1999:156). A law that made it illegal for Africans to attend church services in white areas was fortunately not enforced. Not that this would have had any effect on the Zionists since a kind of church apartheid between them and the mainline churches, both white and black, existed at the time.

A survey of the subsequent state interference in the urbanisation process of Africans concludes:

numerous attempts [have been] made by the state during this century to control the movement and settlement of the African population ... [it] was ... a guiding theme of state policy that African urbanization was not a permanent phenomenon ... The resistance by Africans to state policies is another common thread of this history. Africans never consented to be mere passive victims in this process. They consistently struggled to retain an element of control over the movement and settlement policies of the state (Gelderblom & Kok 1994:92-93).

Zion thrives

The massive growth of Christian adherence among blacks in the broader South African context which was running parallel to these developments during the first half of the century, has been noted. Africans 'continued to be the key agents of Christianization in the twentieth century, most obviously in the AICs' (Elphick 1997:7).

The most significant development concerning the AICs was the rise of a third type, besides the Ethiopians and the larger Zion City kind which were mostly rural based: smaller indigenous spiritual churches, typified as Zionist-Apostolic, thrived chiefly among the rapidly growing black urban class:

Deteriorating conditions on the land forced large numbers of Africans off the land and into the cities. Between 1939 and 1952 the South African urban black population almost doubled: the comparatively high wages in town did not keep step with increasing costs of rent, food, transport, fuel, and clothing; the urban community suffered from insufficient housing, inadequate municipal services, and malnutrition, especially of children.

Under such conditions indigenous spiritual churches expanded rapidly (Pretorius & Jafta 1997:219).

Predominantly Zionists – together with Apostolic churches, which were akin to, but different from, them concentrated to recover 'a human identity in the midst of dehumanizing economic, social, and political environments' (Chidester 1992:113). What kind of response did the Zionists in the Cape Town area present? The question is partially answered by taking Langa as example (for which some relevant written sources are available).

I have already referred to the presence of Zionists in this township. In 1963 there were 30 churches in the 'model location' of which 15 were, in current terminology, AICs. Four of these were Zionist, in which men predominated, in contrast to most of the other churches, where female members outnumbered men. The leaders of the Zionist churches did not have any formal theological training and some had not completed a primary school course. Perhaps these leaders' low level of education led the people of Langa themselves to distinguish between what they called 'real' and 'self-made' churches.

Another feature of the Langa Zionists at the time is noticeable (especially in the light of my own research more than three decades later): 'In the Zionist churches, and perhaps all the 'self-made' churches when African controlled, the form of ritual tends to approximate to traditional diviners' rituals and makes these churches particularly attractive to illiterate pagans coming to work in town' (Wilson & Mafeje 1963:95; cf. 92–93).

A further reason why the other churches of Langa disregarded the Zionists was their so-called fissiparous tendency, which is still a problem today. The Langa example is typical of later developments. In 1958 the Kanana Zionist Movement broke away from the Medium Zionist Church which was founded two years earlier. In the same year a second group split off and established the Spiritual Zionist Church. The next year the Holy Apostolic Church was founded due to a schism (Wilson & Mafeje 1963:99).

Yet there is a much more positive side to the Langa Zionists:

Unlike the 'Separatist' or 'Ethiopian' imitation of mission churches, Zionist churches in the period ca. 1938 to ca. 1958, embodied more creative efforts to establish a new African Christian identity. They did this by Africanising Christianity thus making it relevant to their situation as African people ... Zionist churches were the new bases for social

organization African people required in order to adapt to the new and changing urban situation (Kondlo 1990:68).

In this way the Zionists contributed to the making of the community of Langa. They represented 'the attempts of the "poorest of the poor" and the illiterate elements of this community to regain some control over the process of cultural change experienced by the African people' (p. 77).

Surviving hard times

In the meantime 'the new and changing urban situation' unfolded in a manner which made the lives and the living conditions of the 'back-of-the-mountain people' deteriorate progressively. The 'squatter problem' had become a social, administrative and legal issue of huge proportions. During the 1960s attempts to limit the size of the urban African population through the resettlement and endorsing-out of thousands of residents became increasingly severe: 'In total, more than 18 000 men and almost 6 000 women were "endorsed out" of Cape Town between 1954 and 1962' (Bickford-Smith, van Heyningen & Worden 1999:175).

This was to have grave consequences. In a Black Sash chronology of the 'limited acceptance to dispossession and exclusion' of blacks in Cape Town, an entry for 1960 reads as follows: 'This is the year of Sharpsville and the great Pan-Africanist Congress march on Cape Town, followed by the State of Emergency, civil unrest and hard repression, including the banning of ANC and PAC. Within a year both had resolved to embark on armed struggle, departing from a tradition of nearly 80 years of non-violent resistance to white imposed segregation' (de Tolly & Nash 1984:15).

During the 1970s black urbanisation and informal settlement (a euphemism for large shacks and slum areas with little or no services), as well as large-scale overcrowding, increased markedly. In the mid-1970s there were thousands of Africans living 'illegally' in some 37 squatter settlements that had grown on the edges of greater Cape Town. It became increasingly clear that the attempt to do away with a permanent settled African population in the city could never be successful and that the growth of this urban population could not be stopped by the decision not to expand the townships. The new ones, Nyanga and Gugulethu, did not contribute much

to ameliorating the situation of many tens of thousands who continued to squat on the perimeter of Cape Town.

The additional population was accommodated through increased densities in township houses as well as by extensive backyard squatting. Owing to fierce resistance, bolstered by some local and overseas support, population removals and the control of the growth of informal settlements became increasingly difficult to carry out. 'After a long period of confrontation, the legality of the squatter settlement of Crossroads near Cape Town was recognised in the beginning of the eighties. Although the state earlier wanted to restrict this recognition to Crossroads only, new settlements mushroomed around Crossroads and, after a long struggle, these were legalised as well' (Gelderblom & Kok 1994:91).

At the end of the decade Saunders (1980:33) summarised the situation: 'The African population which has now grown to probably two hundred thousand continues to live a precarious existence, no part of the citizenry of the Mother City, which has, for almost one hundred and fifty years, benefited from having in its midst people today known as Africans.'

Built-up tensions and strained relations among groups of the inhabitants of squatlands living in such conditions increased and had to come to a head. This happened repeatedly and violently during the 1980s. In 1981 about 600 men, women and children were evicted from the main Langa barracks and later moved to the outskirts of Crossroads. A split developed between two squatter groups and a crisis ensued in the adjacent Nyanga. A researcher makes the following poignant remarks: 'The fact that the Nyanga crisis was a crisis where predominantly Christian squatters were supported by predominantly Christian organisations against a State led by professing Christians is a devastating and tragic indictment of the church as a whole in South Africa' (Swart 1982:71; cf. 7, 29).

More serious violence and faction fighting erupted at Crossroads in April and again in December of 1983, the latter leaving two dead and 60 shacks burnt down. Many fled to the neighbouring KTC settlement (de Tolly & Nash 1984:6, 8). The government's response to the escalation of squatter struggles was to announce a new township, Khayelitsha, to be built on the sandy wastes of the Cape Flats, some 35 kilometres from Cape Town's centre (see photograph on page xvi). The idea was to house 'legal' squatters in corehouses and 'illegal' ones on site and service land. This move offered

some kind of improvement to many thousands of squatters, but came nowhere near to managing the situation.

From 1985 to 1986 repeated confrontations erupted between militant youths, the *comrades*, and more conservative *witdoeke* (who wore white headbands as a sign of identity). At the heart of the matter were conflict over territorial control and the struggle to win settlement rights. Warlords often usurped leadership positions in the squatter settlements. With reference to, among others, Crossroads during this period, the following description has been given:

Free-standing informal settlements are sometimes the personal power bases of individual 'shacklords' ... These people run their settlements along highly autocratic lines, allocating sites and securing services in return for rent and allegiance from inhabitants ... From the viewpoint of supplying basic services, the shacklords might be seen to facilitate informal settlement. But the cost in terms of insecurity, dependence and exploitation is often high (quoted by Kok & Gelderblom 1994:9).

An analysis in 1986 of the squatter struggles in the Cape Flats since the 1950s, concluded that the government had failed '... to effect control over urbanisation and influx control ... The history of squatter struggles in the Cape Peninsula reveals that the winning of such control will not be achieved without struggle and conflict' (Cole 1986:104).

The Zionists were caught up in this continuing struggle and conflict. Apart from the rumours and fears that were rife at times, the mildest form of affliction to which they were witness was that weekday and even Sunday morning services had to be delayed or even cancelled when fighting was taking place. A respondent recalls that when shots rang out in the vicinity of a Zionist service, the congregation dispersed there and then. One bishop remembers a particularly difficult period: 'I was warned not to enter New Crossroads to bury a member as I might later have to be buried myself.'

Besides this restriction of church activities, some Zionist members had to flee their homes. Seven respondents witness that the houses of their members and in one case even the tents that they occupied temporarily were burnt down. One respondent's house was the target of arson: 'In 1986 my house was burnt at KTC [KTC is part of the New Crossroads township]. This was no exception, all the houses there were burning.' In the stories of the respondents, the KTC area largely bore the brunt of the disturbances of the

mid-1980s. Particularly serious was the case of an archbishop who was shot in the back at a youth rally. Fortunately, he survived. Another archbishop and respondent relates his experience: 'I came upon an adult with a burning tyre round his neck. I kicked it away and just then the police arrived'. Four testify that children or adults of their churches were shot during the riots. Some died: 'The youngster of a female member was shot by the police while he was looting a bar they burnt at KTC.' Sadly, the violence did not end once democracy was introduced. Its nature and causes merely changed (see chapter 4 for examples).

The Zionists' response to the various forms of restriction, deprivation and suffering they experienced, and the violence related to apartheid in particular, was in the first instance not to answer evil with evil. Their reply to violence was non-violence. A respondent's saying, 'I do not need a gun, here is my gun', holding out his Bible, suggests a religious solution.

Furthermore, the Zionists were not inclined to reject the social environment or escape the unpleasant realities by withdrawal into a religious world of fantasy. The need to be patient and to endure (*ukunyamezela*) is typical of responses: 'We were carrying a heavy burden during that time.' However, this does not imply a passive, fatalistic attitude. Prayer, personal and collective, was especially seen as appropriate to meet the situation: 'When relations among people are bad, we pray.' Whenever they could, the Zionists would attend weekday or Sunday meetings and services. It is perhaps this experience of togetherness, their feeling of being in a safe haven and awareness of the power of the Holy Spirit which sustained them spiritually and psychologically more than anything else during the dark period of apartheid. The role they played to console and to support the bereaved during wakes and funerals was especially valuable.

While generally not active in the struggle for freedom or in competing parties, the Zionists enabled thousands of their members to endure the emotional and economic damage of the apartheid era. A female respondent recalls a few significant aspects of the hard times through which they went:

During the time of oppression or discrimination here in South Africa life was very difficult. This applies to both poor and rich. When we went to worship services we were afraid to preach on texts referring to revolt against the government. This was because of unbelievers who were sent by the police to listen carefully to what the drift of your sermon was. And

the next thing you knew was that you are arrested at night and questioned. They warn you with a threatening finger against putting yourself in danger by choosing the wrong text to preach.

I kept on praying when I went out [to church] and begged the Lord to accompany me. For there were many problems in Christianity. Sometimes while we were still praying, the door was opened and people carrying *sjamboks* and fighting sticks entered the house of worship. Sometimes you were forcefully removed and even beaten. You had no chance to ask the reasons for their conduct so that it was difficult to lay a charge against them. Your charge was not acceptable and nothing came of your attempt to go to the law.

The Zionists advised people not to use places of worship to address political matters in particular. This was not very difficult for them seeing that there were prophets and seers of visions who were quick to see the problems of people and who relieved their burdens in this manner.

A certain minister who had a hard time in Zionism was Reverend N. of M., a member of the Church of the Heart. He buried people who died striving for freedom. He wore black attire similar to that of the mainline churches to conduct [the funeral]. Yet, at the time there were police who would wait until he finished and then, when he was on his way, he was caught, locked up in prison and beaten. This was extremely painful and what is more he had a tumour on his back, so large that his back seemed to be broken. He could no longer see and recognised you only from your voice. All this was done by the white police. Yet he prophesied that when he died, he would never die from natural causes. He would be killed by a bribed person but would be buried in a proper way. Later he was indeed knifed and killed.

Linda Thomas has written a book on the St John's Apostolic Faith Mission Church. Although not a Zionist church, St John's is much akin to Zionism while the members live in the same Cape Flats environment as the Zionists. Generalising, Thomas argues convincingly that in this period the AICs generally provided a balm for many of the poorest black South Africans. By creating healing and transformative rituals they took charge of their own oppressed lives and liberated themselves from the stress of life under apartheid: 'While the healing rituals did not reverse the powerful formal and informal structures of the apartheid macrosystem as a sociocultural form, they empowered poor black South Africans, the most vulnerable within the

system, to live as liberated a life as possible under the press of the macrostructure' (Thomas, L 1999:121).

The pre-1990 times of rapid social change in the Mother City, through which black Christians lived, as well as the Zionists responses to these times, are to some measure reflected above. In terms of this outline the significant factor to note is that the Zionists, together with other AICs, were meaningfully present during these critical times. Evidence of this, for instance, was the consensus of a broad spectrum of church leaders, representing a number of denominations that the AICs were the first churches to operate spontaneously in the new Khayelitsha. In socio-economic respect they played an unrecorded and little recognised but stabilising role in the settlement of the townships of Cape Town, contributing to the adjustment of people to the often bewildering urban change.

Crucial factors

The last decade of the century brought both positive and negative changes to the inhabitants of the sprawling townships of Cape Town, as well as urban areas elsewhere in South Africa. Perhaps the changed status of Robben Island – from prison to heritage museum – symbolises the transformation most fittingly. The unbanning of political parties in 1990, the release of Nelson Mandela and the first democratic election of 1994 were all part of a great turning-point in the history of Cape Town and the country in general.

Yet, amidst the freedom that political liberation has brought, has the quality of life of the Zionists and other blacks living in the Cape Flats since been significantly enhanced? Conflicting answers are given to this vital question. In chapter 4 I attend to the answers provided by the Zionists themselves. Here I sketch outsiders' views of some of the major factors and structural conditions that in a crucial manner affect the quality of life in the townships.

The following reports, a selection from Cape Town newspapers, provide an indication of the *socio-economic context* and the accompanying circumstances in which the majority of the black people of the Mother City find themselves:

- Shocking figures of violent deaths in the Mother City [all population groups included] emerge from the police's mortuary in Salt River,

which manages the most violent deaths in South Africa and possibly also in the world. South Africa, with a population of one sixth of that of the USA, has a number of murders equal to 60 per cent of that of the States. Most of the violent deaths in the Cape Town area occur in the black townships of Khayelitsha, Gugulethu and Nyanga' (*Die Burger*, 2 August 1994).

- 'A shock survey by the Medical Research Council . . . has revealed that a high percentage of children in Khayelitsha primary schools, sometimes as high as 100 per cent, are infected with worms . . . [If] left untreated, malnourishment, blindness, epilepsy, paralysis and even organ failure can occur' (*Saturday Argus*, 7/8 November 1998).
- 'A report by an independent commission reveals that there is proof of the existence of a "third force" in Crossroads and Philippi consisting of criminal elements. The primary cause of violence is reportedly political competition and intolerance. Traditional leaders who compete with leaders with democratic values aggravate the matter. The influx of people from rural areas increases the pressure on land and housing services while there is apparently unlimited access to legal and illegal firearms in the area' (*Die Burger*, 12 December 1998).
- '560 cases of rape in Khayelitsha were reported between January 1995 and August 1997' (*Saturday Argus*, 12/13 December 1998).
- 'While 123 shacks were destroyed in one fire on 15 December 1997, four people died in 40 Khayelitsha fires that broke out during December 1998. The main reasons for fires on the Cape Flats are paraffin stoves and candles that fall over as well as the dryness of the building materials of the shacks' (*Die Burger*, 9 January 1999).
- 'The Tuberculosis Advocacy Team has announced that it is now official that the Western Cape has the highest TB figure in the world, with 559 out of 100 000 people suffering from this disease' (*Die Burger*, 5 March 1999).
- 'Two brothers, Vuso (34) and Mzoli Nyakaza (33), who stayed together at shack 5 100 were brutally murdered by a mob in the Joe Slovo informal settlement, apparently following a dispute over beer' (*City Vision*, 15 April 1999).

- 'A local woman, MN – allegedly a witch – was killed by an angry mob from a squatter camp near Strand after she had apparently kept a woman prisoner in a shack for nearly two years' (*City Vision*, 13 May 1999).
- 'Three taxi operators were shot dead and three seriously wounded when a gunman opened fire with an AK-47 at a shebeen at the Nomzamo taxi rank last night. The attack was apparently linked to the war between rival groups over taxi routes' (*Cape Argus*, 19 August 1999).
- 'While confusion about the relationship between HIV and AIDS spreads practically as fast as the virus itself, health workers in Khayelitsha struggle with superstition and absolute ignorance. According to counsellors here many people believe that Aids is an "evil illness" which is spread by evil spirits or white witchdoctors. This is the reason why especially Xhosa patients often prefer to visit a *sangoma*' (*Die Burger*, 3 November 2000).

Indeed, to recover human dignity in a dehumanising environment does not automatically happen when constitutional freedom arrives. Such phenomena as disruption of social cohesion, high unemployment, poverty, crime, public and domestic violence, loss of cultural values, inadequate health care and housing, and environmental pollution, and above all, the AIDS pandemic, all contribute to a troubling township situation. Although the struggle for urban permanence was won, the process of reconstruction is gradual and, due to its slow pace, causes continued frustration and deprivation.

The major change from the previous to the new era in South Africa is no unmixed blessing to the adherents of the AICs:

Social unrest was endemic to members' lives, as was a cycle of unemployment and violence in the aftermath of apartheid, the transition from a white supremacist to a democratic government created economic uncertainty and unemployment in addition to racial and criminal violence. Apartheid's legacy exacerbated the problems marginalized people experienced (Thomas, L 1999:34).

The general hard lot of the majority of the blacks of Cape Town *vis-à-vis* the front-of-the-mountain people is apparent from the outline above. Add to this the fact that there are more than 100 500 shacks in the Cape Metropolitan Area while an estimated 10 000 people pour into the townships each month

(*Die Burger*, 27 March 2001). The Zionists, together with their fellow township dwellers, certainly seem to be in a vulnerable and, to outsiders, often unimaginable position.

However, these reports represent the dark side of the picture. Fortunately there is another, more positive and constructive dimension. This became increasingly evident as I moved around the townships during the period of research, 1996 to 2000. In spite of the tremendous backlog in housing and the ever-increasing population, improvements to the infrastructure and facilities as well as the upgrading of housing in the townships of Cape Town, and especially in Khayelitsha, were gradually and in some cases progressively taking place. This applies to roads and pavements, taxi and bus ranks (often with vending stalls), shopping centres, serviced sites, sport centres, electricity, sewerage, telephones, water supply, in addition to networks of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), crèches, child care centres, libraries, clinics, schools, police posts and fire stations. All these amenities were usually scarce or non-existent in the old South Africa.

In addition, many small and informal businesses are booming: restaurants and other eating places, hairdressing salons, shebeens, *muti* stalls, enterprises for exhaust systems, second-hand building material or fruit and vegetable selling, and even the door-to-door vending of stolen goods.

This impression of overall improvement in the living conditions of blacks in Cape Town is confirmed by data provided by Wolfgang Thomas (1999:3) the Chief Economist of the Western Cape Investment and Trade Promotion Agency. After having analysed a set of qualitative indicators that takes into account population increase, housing, education, (un)employment, health services and income levels, he concludes:

To sum up, whilst it is difficult to generalise about changes in the quality of life of individual households (as in all marginalised communities, sudden deterioration of the position of a key bread winner can decrease the overall welfare of a household permanently) there can be little doubt about a significant upward mobility and rise in average living standards among the rapidly increasing number of African households in the Cape Metropolitan Area.

The Zionists are generally influenced by this upward mobility, in particular, as the younger generation becomes increasingly educated. Education can, however, lead the younger Zionists either to join other churches or to

who are socially ostracised are hardly motivated to conform to the norms of those who are isolating them, and may also be expected to experience a degree of hostility towards those who are alienating and discrediting them (Kok & Gelderblom 1994:162–163; cf. 151).

In the townships there are innumerable links and constant interaction between squatters and those living in informal housing, on the one hand, and in formal housing, on the other. Therefore, the problem of stigmatisation should not be exaggerated, though it is a factor that has a significant negative impact on countless black inhabitants of the Cape Flats. As seen in the following chapters, the Zionists, in their own perception, are particularly sensitive to stigmatisation of which they are frequently the actual targets.

The social history of blacks in greater Cape Town is, for the first time since van Riebeeck's establishment, likely to take a major turn for the better in the new millennium. The authorities now in power have treated the interests of the back-of-the-mountain people – at least in intention if not yet in achievement – as a priority so that a more promising future, which includes the redress of human indignity, beckons.

If Zion is, in terms of church history, a Pentecostal outgrowth in the Xhosa cultural soil, its coming to town – in this case Cape Town – has affected its existence in a far-reaching manner. The growth of the Zionist churches in the Cape Flats is directly related to the continuing urbanisation of rural people from Xhosaland and elsewhere. Be that as it may, I agree with David Chidester (1992:114) when he stresses the role of history in the study of AICs, Zionists included: 'The clearest picture of independent churches ... emerges from considering the historical process of their religious formation. In that history, African indigenous churches were not only important religious movements, but also significant indicators of conflict, change, and creative innovation in South African society.'

In the following chapter I return to, among others, the ways in which the Zionists of the Cape Flats responded to the times through which they have lived, in particular to some of their experience of the so-called new South Africa.