

Allan Anderson

MOYA



The Holy Spirit
in an African Context



UNISA

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Alton Anderson

A project of the Institute for Theological Studies

University of South Africa
Pretoria

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Foreword

In this study of Allan Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African context*, we have a valuable contribution to pneumatology in an African perspective. The focus is mainly on the African independent churches of the prophetic type and on African Pentecostal churches - some with and others without links with Western Pentecostal churches. All these churches share an emphasis on the inspiration and revelation of the Holy Spirit and are therefore appropriately referred to as 'Spirit-type churches'.

Anderson convincingly argues that pneumatology is a neglected dimension in written African theology and in the approach of many Western mission churches to the traditional African spirit world. The Spirit-type churches step into this gap with their vividly enacted Spirit-theology, an overriding faith in the presence of the Holy Spirit which permeates all of church life. It is the merit of this study that Anderson not only gives full recognition to the pneumatological significance of these churches, but also provides us with a penetrating description and analysis of the characteristics and manifestations of a Spirit-type pneumatology. In a rich tapestry of Spirit activities speaking in tongues feature not so much as a continuation of traditional religious practices, but as a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence and guidance. Prophecies, in turn, are integral to the ministry of pastoral care, and as such deal more with diagnosis and therapy in faith-healing than with predictions of the future.

Valuable insights are derived from an analysis of the interaction between Spirit-type pneumatology and major tenets of African religions and world views. Special attention is given to the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to African power concepts and to the African spirit world, particularly the ancestors. In this field Anderson takes issue with the theories of a number of prominent missiologists and anthropologists who have studied the phenomenon of African Independency.

A fair yet critical assessment of relevant literature leads him to the conclusion that the source of and inspiration behind the prophetic practices of the Spirit-type churches is not an impersonal, manipulable power - as some observers have indicated - but an active personal force, the biblical Holy Spirit. Much of the evidence, he argues, reflects a genuine understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in the African context. The manifestations of Spirit-power should not therefore be interpreted one-sidedly in terms of a mere extension of African magic or spirit powers, but as the good news of God's Holy Spirit which provides the ultimate answer to the African quest for power (i.e. physical well-being, social stability and peace; life itself) in a spirit-threatened world. Anderson also argues against the serious allegation of some observers that the traditional concept of the ancestral spirit has simply been transferred to the Holy Spirit (mainly in the Zionist churches). With reference to the healing practices of the Shona prophets of Zimbabwe he illustrates a general understanding of the Holy Spirit's inspiration which diametrically opposes rather than facilitates the traditional sacrificial demands of the ancestors. Here too, the categorical judgement of some observers that prophetic practices in the African independent churches involve a misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit and amount to a syncretic accommodation of traditional religion - magic and ancestral veneration - is convincingly disproved.

In a final chapter African pneumatology is viewed in biblical perspective. This represents a challenging attempt by an Evangelical and a Charismatic to evaluate a typically African people's theology, a theology from the underside. In this respect Anderson's contribution is of great significance to Evangelicals, Charismatics and Pentecostals engaged in the Christian Church and theology of Africa. An in-depth systematic theological or biblical exegetical debate is not attempted, but Anderson convincingly teases out the numerous parallels between the Old and New Testament prophetic practices and Spirit manifestations on the one hand, and those of the African Spirit-type churches on the other. He succeeds therefore in presenting us with what I would call *a valuable introduction to a theological evaluation of African pneumatology*. His insistence, for instance, that the traditional African perception of God as the author of all power in the universe, is a *praeparatio evangelica* for the Christian message of the power of the Holy Spirit, and his observations on the continuity/discontinuity debate regarding the interaction between traditional and scriptural concepts in the prophetic practices of the Spirit-type churches, provide us with leads for further enquiry and debate.

On account of the fair and positive approach of Anderson towards Spirit manifestations in Spirit-type churches, his critical review of literature on the subject and his well-illustrated arguments that the Spirit-type churches are

making an enriching contribution to African theology, I strongly recommend *Moya* to the reader. The scholar will feel challenged by the author's insights and convictions to further probe the subject concerned; and members of the Spirit-type churches will appreciate an identification and understanding which inspires increasing receptivity towards the movement of God's Spirit.

Inus Daneel
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Preface

This work would not have been achieved without the sustained interest and support of several people. Initially the study was inspired by the extensive writings and research of Professor Inus Daneel of the Department of Missiology at the University of South Africa. He has read through the entire manuscript and has made many valuable suggestions and comments; and he has also written the Foreword. My thanks also go to Dr Takatso Mofokeng of the Department of Systematic Theology at UNISA, who also read through the manuscript and helped me see these issues from a fresh perspective. The Head of the Institute for Theological Research at UNISA, Professor Willem Vorster, and the previous Leader of the Pentecostalism Project, Professor Henry Lederle (whose idea it was to publish this research), both made this publication possible. I must also give thanks to all the sons and daughters of Africa who are the subject of this study, the many friends I have made over the years too numerous to mention. I give thanks to my family, Olwen and Matthew, whose patience and encouragement helped me complete what was at first a daunting task. Above all, praise and thanks to God, whose grace made it all possible.

Unless otherwise stated, all biblical quotations are taken from the New International Version.

INTRODUCTION

The Holy Spirit and African independent churches

1 A TENTATIVE EVALUATION

The doctrine of the Spirit, or pneumatology, occupies the central place in the majority of the so-called African independent churches, especially in Southern Africa, where their church members constitute up to 40% of the black population, a very significant proportion. Some researchers have even suggested that the doctrine of the Spirit is emphasised to the almost total exclusion of other Christian doctrines, resulting in a weak or impoverished theology. This we will consider later. Because of the central place given to the Holy Spirit in these churches as well as in Pentecostal churches worldwide, Christian theologians are beginning to take pneumatology seriously. Indeed, it seems that this has been a very glaring omission in Africa. Mostert (1986:85) says that because the Spirit is a fundamental concept in African independent churches 'pneumatology should now receive serious attention in the theological approach'. This I shall attempt to do, tentatively and fully conscious of my limitations.

I am aware of the fact that I am not a black African; and therefore I am limited by my own Western cultural background and education. For almost the whole of my life, however, I have lived in Southern Africa. In addition to this, my love for and commitment to Africa, its peoples and their cultural heritage, and my identification with their struggle for liberation are all reasons for considering myself an African. My active involvement with African churches most of my life, and the fact that my entire adult life (since 1968) has been spent in the

Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, enables me to have some insight into the 'Spirit-type' churches, as defined below. If 'African' is meant to signify love for the continent and people of Africa or commitment to an African ideal (Sawyer 1987:25), then I would certainly include myself in this category.

Furthermore, because so little has been written on this subject by black Africans, there are times when this literature study will appear to be a 'white debate', particularly as I have drawn heavily on and been influenced by the extensive writings of Professor Inus Daneel. He has constantly striven to purge the study of African independent churches from Western misconceptions. In the process, Daneel has taken issue with several 'white' observers, and this is reflected in what follows. He has done substantially more research and has produced more literature on the African independent churches than anyone I know. His pursuit of excellence in this field has been a source of inspiration as well as of trepidation!

My approach to the subject will attempt to be sensitive and sympathetic. At times I may even have written off too perfunctorily what I see as mistaken conclusions made by Western analysts. But I hope that this provisional attempt to promote a truly African Christian pneumatology will not be considered presumptuous. I am not creating an African pneumatology; *that* would be presumptuous. What I am attempting to do is to describe and tentatively evaluate pneumatology in Africa as it already exists; and thereby I hope to emphasise what I see to be a neglected field in African Christian theology.

2 TERMINOLOGY USED

When dealing with the so-called African independent churches the problem of terminology always arises, and I do not want to enter extensively into this debating arena. It is, however, necessary at the outset to define the terms I shall be using, in order to avoid possible confusion. I have purposely avoided terms like 'messianic', 'prophetic', and 'syncretistic' because of their obviously loaded connotations and their implicit value judgements. Words like 'separatist' and 'sectarian' are usually used by writers from older (Western) churches whose particular denominations happened to have 'separated' over a hundred years ago! From a Roman Catholic viewpoint, all other Christians could be termed 'separatist' or 'sectarian'. The terms 'Zionist' and 'Zionist-type' churches are more adequate, but limit their location to Southern Africa, where the name 'Zion' has frequent use. Furthermore, many independent churches in Southern Africa would prefer not to be associated with the term 'Zionist', even though they may well fit into a 'Zionist-type' category. Never-

theless, a term is needed that differentiates the churches with an emphasis on the Holy Spirit from those other independent churches such as the 'Ethiopian-type churches' (Daneel 1987:38). And so, following Daneel, I will use the term 'Spirit-type churches' to designate 'prophetic movements which emphasise the inspiration and revelation of the Holy Spirit' (Daneel 1971:285). At the same time it must be remembered that this is a very wide term indeed. Historically, many of these churches originated in the healing and Pentecostal movements of the United States of America, imported to Africa in the early years of this century. For this reason, Hollenweger (1972:151), a world authority on the Pentecostal movement, refers to Zionists as 'independent African Pentecostal churches', a term which has been controversial among churches of 'white' Pentecostal origin.

Today, there are a number of independent churches in Africa which have no 'mission church' connection, but which may be regarded as Pentecostal or Spirit-type churches in the true sense of the word. These churches generally tend to be closer to Western Pentecostal churches than to the 'Zionist-type' churches; nevertheless, the term 'Spirit-type' is appropriate to them. Examples are the independent African Gospel Church of Job Chiliza (Sundkler 1976:85ff) and the semi-independent Assemblies of God work of Nicholas Bhengu (Pauw 1975:294ff). There are other independent churches in South Africa today which I would describe as 'African Neo-Pentecostal' such as the Grace Bible Church originating in Soweto, and the Victory Fellowship originating in Kwa-Thema, Springs. These are both churches of significant following, with branches in several different places.

One might venture to say that most Pentecostal churches in Africa, whether truly 'independent' or not, have developed a specifically African character which has many parallels with the independent Spirit-type churches. I propose to include them in the terminology 'Spirit-type', simply because they also emphasise the working of the Holy Spirit in the church. They, too, are a genuinely African manifestation of Christian pneumatology. I realise in making these inclusions that Daneel's category is possibly made wider than he intended; but this obviates endless explanations and further categorising - such as having to distinguish between 'independent Spirit-type churches', 'independent Pentecostal churches' and 'Pentecostal churches of Western origin'. These distinctions are valuable for comparative purposes, and will be made where necessary, but to my mind, the term 'Spirit-type churches' is broad enough to embrace them all.

3 AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY AND WESTERN PRESUPPOSITIONS

In an earlier evaluation of the African independent church movement Oosthuizen (1968:120) considers what he terms 'the misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit' to be 'the great difficulty the church faces in Africa'. This, he says, 'is not due only to the African's strange sense of the supernatural world, but also because of his essentially suprarational and suprahistorical disposition'. Oosthuizen admits here that he does not really understand African spirituality because it does not fit nicely into the Western philosophical categories to which he is accustomed. Indeed, this is the problem facing any Western observer of essentially African phenomena, including Western missionaries. As Taylor (1963:21-22) has observed, the Christianity exported to Africa from Europe and North America was a 'too-cerebral religion ... the white man's religion ... a classroom religion'. In contrast, African traditional religion is essentially what Parrinder (1954:24) terms a 'spiritual religion'. Shropshire, quoted by Oosthuizen (1968:136) observes that the African 'is part of his environment, and is at one with it, which is largely that of spiritual and natural forces'. Taylor (1963:59) warns that in understanding the whole concept of African spirituality Westerners need to be wary of 'being too precisely analytical, for that would transpose the imagery back into European symbols and destroy its meaning'.

Before a Westerner can comprehensively understand anything really African, it will be necessary to attempt to detach oneself from presuppositions, such as the dualism that sees everything in terms of 'secular' and 'spiritual' (or 'sacred'). Thus, when a Westerner is talking about (as Oosthuizen did) 'the supernatural world' and the 'suprarational and suprahistorical disposition' of Africans, or about a 'spiritual religion' (Parrinder) - then something is usually being described which is set *over against* the opposites: natural, rational, historical, secular, and so on. This the African rarely does, except when there is a need for orientation to a Western audience. An African would much rather emphasise that things belong to each other and that there are common elements in things and events (Dierks 1983:49). Taylor (1963:72) has vividly described the African world-view as:

... that sense of cosmic oneness ... fundamentally all things share the same nature, and the same interaction one upon another ... a hierarchy of power but not of being, for all are one, all are here, all are now No distinction can be made between sacred and secular, between natural and supernatural, for Nature, Man and the Unseen are inseparably involved in one another in a total community.

The African world-view is holistic; thus everything is at the same time given 'spiritual' and 'secular' meaning without being categorised.

4 SCOPE

I will try to assess the evaluations made by Western theologians on African pneumatology in the light of the African world-view described above. I will attempt to show that some of the main evaluations concerning African interpretations of 'spirit', and Christian pneumatology itself in Africa, suffer themselves from the Western tendency towards 'investigating and systematising things or experiences by means of dispassionate analytical probing' (Dierks 1983:52). In particular, the tendency of Western observers to filter African phenomena through their own cultural and theological grid, without penetrating the African thought world in any depth, will be criticised.

In that which follows, there will be times when I will probe and when I will analyse, but I hope that I will not be dispassionate. Idowu (1969:14) made the very apt remark that:

One of the major assignments before those who seek to communicate and inculcate the Gospel in Africa is that of understanding Africa and appreciating the fact that they must learn to address Africans as Africans.

I have tried to understand African thought in the pages that follow. Any errors of judgment that I have made are because of my own limited understanding; this study has been in some respects a journey into the unknown. I have tried to get involved in my topic; in the process of this involvement I have discovered that African ideas of the Holy Spirit interpreted in the light of an African holistic world-view are not as far removed from the biblical revelation as is sometimes asserted. In fact, I suspect that some Western 'dispassionate' ideas of the Holy Spirit are further away from the truth than those they criticise!

I shall try to provide a survey of the practices and beliefs of African Christians, particularly (but not exclusively) those in the Spirit-type churches, relating to the person and the power of the Holy Spirit. Before these can be understood, however, a general probe must be made into the traditional African world view and its spirituality, with its concepts of God, ancestors and power - the African spirit world with perceptions that are complex for Westerners to understand. This will be done in the first chapter. By way of a survey, the more recent contributions of African theologians, who have largely concentrated on areas other

than pneumatology, will also be considered. At the same time an attempted evaluation will be given of whatever they may have contributed to this discussion, especially where it relates to independent churches in Africa. I will contend that African theologians have not adequately deliberated on this theme which is so crucial to a contextualised and relevant theology in Africa. Their main debate has been on the need for an African theology, and theologising in Africa. The vast subject of pneumatology in Africa has virtually been left untouched.

In the second chapter it will be seen to what extent the Spirit-type churches have entered into the vacuum, created by the scant attention given by theologians to a biblical and African pneumatology. Some time will be spent on the characteristic features of their understanding of pneumatology, including a look at their theological and historical roots in Western Pentecostalism and American black slave religion. Their pneumatology is found in their practices rather than in a formal theology of the Spirit - implicit pneumatology rather than explicit. These practices will be found to have a biblical rather than a traditional orientation, and to be largely based on Pentecostal teaching on the Spirit rather than on the pre-Christian past. Pneumatological factors in their growth, including the people 'of the Spirit' who lead them, and the significance of their central focus on the Holy Spirit in the African context will be considered. Western Pentecostal teaching on the Spirit will be looked at in this and the following chapter only inasmuch as it is relevant to African pneumatology. The question of whether there is in fact an overemphasis on pneumatology in the African Spirit-type churches will be considered.

In chapter three I will attempt to describe how pneumatology is enacted in some of the manifestations of the Spirit found among Spirit-type churches. In particular, I have chosen to concentrate on a description of those pneumatological manifestations with which I am most familiar - receiving the Spirit, speaking in tongues and prophecy. The contributions of various researchers will also be looked at squarely, particularly where their interpretations of African phenomena have been somewhat onesided and too 'Western'. Parallels with traditional religious phenomena will be considered, as well as the contribution of these manifestations towards a relevant and contextual pneumatology in Africa. I will emphasise the need for an observer to attempt an interpretation of these manifestations as they are in fact understood by the African participants themselves. I do therefore take the manifestations seriously. The ways in which these practices meet genuine needs in Africa will be noted.

In considering the relevance of a truly African pneumatology, I will be giving attention to what I consider to be two key issues in this discussion - African concepts of power (chapter four) and the African traditional spirit world (chapter five). Once again, these issues can only be significantly addressed if we see them against the background of traditional concepts. In the fourth chapter therefore, the supreme value of the acquisition and manipulation of power in traditional religious thought is first considered. This is measured against African Christian concepts and manifestations of the power of the Spirit, particularly as found in Spirit-type churches. It is hoped that the myths of an 'impersonal' and a 'manipulable' Spirit will be exploded in the process of describing these manifestations, which tend to reveal a personal Spirit who gives his gifts to people as he wills.

Similarly, the fifth chapter commences with a discussion of the traditional spirit world with its various spirits, and discusses and describes particularly the ancestor cult. Ancestor 'possession' is compared with the receiving of the Holy Spirit in Spirit-type churches as described in chapter three. The alleged 'misunderstanding' of the Holy Spirit is examined against this background and against the empirical research that has been conducted among these churches. Different, sometimes ambiguous, and sometimes contrasting attitudes towards the ancestor cult amongst independent churches are examined in this context. Instead of manifestations of ancestors and manipulation of power some manifestations of the power of the Spirit of God are discovered.

In the sixth chapter, the pneumatological understandings and manifestations in the African Spirit-type churches will finally be assessed by giving some attention to biblical concepts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit and of 'power'. The parallels between these concepts and manifestations and those in the African Spirit-type churches will briefly be examined. A somewhat fleeting review of the main issues raised, and an attempt to evaluate my preliminary conclusions will be integrated into this chapter. In this whole process a gap existing between our Western pneumatology as conceived in historic churches, and biblical pneumatology will be found. I will attempt to propose some ways in which African 'churches of the Spirit' are filling that gap. The strengths and weaknesses of this African perspective of pneumatology will be considered. My suggestion is that this African contribution is probably closer to the biblical pattern of 'dynamic pneumatology' than has been previously realised.

CHAPTER ONE

The Holy Spirit and the African world view

1 THE AFRICAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE SPIRIT

1.1 Divine involvement

The African understanding of pneumatology may be considered from several perspectives. There are several major areas in which the African understanding of the Holy Spirit, particularly as found in the Spirit-type churches, is evaluated. I have chosen to focus on the following three areas because it is here that the greatest misunderstandings arise, particularly on the part of Western observers.

The first area is connected with the holistic world view mentioned in the Introduction. Because all things from a present material-spiritual unity, it follows that in the African world view the 'spirit' pervades all things. Thus it is that the emphasis of what Oosthuizen (1968:119) used to term 'the nativistic movements' is on 'divine involvement'. In the Spirit-type churches the all-embracing Spirit is involved in every aspect of individual and community life; and this is particularly evident in the person of the prophetic leader, who is pre-eminently a person of the Spirit. This pervading Spirit is, in the earlier view of Oosthuizen (1968:129), simply a continuum of the traditional religion, where

(quoting Lediga): 'the essential thing is that your life should always be identified with the will of the spirit, at work and play, at worship, at a wedding perhaps, at meal times, in the harvesting and preparation of your food'.

The dualistic, rationalistic theology of Western historical churches simply did not meet the need of the African for divine involvement. The results were either that the traditional spiritualism went underground, or that a syncretism emerged in the encounter between African and Western world views. But those were not the only alternatives; in the Spirit-type churches it was discovered that the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit was not as detached and uninvolved as Western missionaries often made it out to be! The African need for divine involvement was met in the doctrine and especially in the enacting of pneumatology, which becomes in Africa both contextualised and a manifestation of biblical reality. In the African world view action is at least as important as reflection; and religion is fundamentally both something you believe or confess, and especially something that you *do*. The Western tendency to oppose or discount the emotional in religion made Western forms of Christianity unattractive to a great many Africans. The pervading Spirit in the Spirit-type independent churches gave Christianity a new vibrancy and relevance to the African.

I will attempt to portray that the biblical concept of the Holy Spirit in fact makes 'divine involvement' possible for the Christian in real, concrete terms; and that this involvement, when entered into, will absorb the Christian in his whole being - and not just his 'soul'. This will often result in a release of emotion as well. Criticisms of African Spirit-type churches and their 'pervading Spirit' with its emotionalism are therefore often irrelevant in a biblical context. Spirit-type churches, like many 'historical' churches, are limited by their humanness, and for this reason sometimes need biblical correction. But many Westerners have probably misunderstood not only the African world view with what seems to them its strange and somewhat unnerving spirit manifestations, but many of them have also missed the essential, dynamic nature of 'spiritual' Christianity as portrayed in the Bible, and have crowded it out with their theologising. The Spirit-type churches have demonstrated that it is at least as important to practise pneumatology as to theorise about it. I am convinced that in Africa there are a myriad of needs that will never be met with our traditional, rational and, in some respects, rather impotent Western philosophical Christianity. What is needed is the sort of innovative African Christianity that is found in many of the independent churches, that takes seriously the African world view with its existential needs. In this respect a relevant pneumatology

in Africa is absolutely essential, and is neglected at our peril. It may be that we will discover that the Spirit-type independent churches have taken the lead here, and provide us with many, if not most of the answers to the perplexing pneumatological problems of Africa.

1.2 The African view of power

The second major area of criticism involves the African view of 'power' as perceived in Spirit-type churches. This will be discussed in the fourth chapter; but we need to briefly look at the issue by way of introduction. It is maintained by several Western observers that 'power' in African traditional religions is an impersonal, manipulable 'life-force' that a person can acquire or lose through various means, especially through 'magic'. We will try to show that this is not in fact the traditional understanding of power; and that in any case, the traditional concept is not simply transferred to the 'Holy Spirit' in the Spirit-type churches, as these observers allege. Although there may be occasions in some of these churches where syncretism is evident in the understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit, it is fair to say that the Spirit-type churches do not conceive of the Holy Spirit as an impersonal, manipulable force at a person's disposal at all.

1.3 The ancestors and the Holy Spirit

Thirdly, there is the whole area of the relationship between the ancestors and the Holy Spirit; the criticism is that the 'Holy Spirit' has simply replaced the function of the ancestors resulting in a syncretistic understanding of pneumatology. We will see that whereas the position of some Spirit-type churches regarding the ancestors is somewhat ambiguous, by and large the most consistent response of these churches to the ancestor cult in traditional religions is one of confrontation, rejection, and exorcism. The theory that the 'Holy Spirit' has simply taken over the functions of the ancestors will be shown to be without foundation. To these and other related issues we shall return in the fifth chapter.

2 AFRICAN TRADITIONAL THOUGHT

2.1 The term 'African'

One must be careful when making generalisations about 'African' traditional thought, as if all Africans from the Cape of Good Hope to Cape Verde and the Horn of Africa have the same traditional religious ideas or philosophy.

Shorter (1978:532), a Catholic authority on religion in Africa, said that before such generalisations could be made it would be necessary to first clearly prove the existence of such through systematic comparative analysis. He regarded as 'the limit to which the study of African traditional religion as a unity can be taken' to be that 'one is studying the treatment received by certain common themes in systems that can be shown to be different' (1978:533). Like Shorter, therefore, I need to preface this discussion with a rider: this is a tentative study of the theme of concepts of spirit which are found throughout black Africa. I do not assume that these concepts are perceived of in the same way by the different peoples and churches discussed. Nonetheless, there is a certain unity of thought which appears to pervade Africa in a way which is quite unlike anything perceived in Europe or Asia. Thus I speak here of 'African traditional thought' in a general way, without denying the particularism of different parts of Africa. In the nature of this study, and because of the resources that were available to me, I have tended to concentrate on Southern Africa, where there is in any case a greater degree of affinity. Where possible, traditional insights in Southern Africa have been compared with those of other parts of Africa.

A discussion of traditional concepts is essential right at the beginning of any study of pneumatology in Africa. Without some insight into traditional ideas of 'spirit' and 'power' one is unable to understand how these should be reinterpreted in the light of the biblical revelation. It is for this reason that we need to evaluate the contributions of the independent churches to an African pneumatology in the light of traditional concepts. And so we will give attention to traditional religious ideas in what follows. Mostert (1986:86) has rightly pointed out that: 'theologians in general do not inform us of what is precisely understood by the 'spirit conceptions' in an African context in terms of which a reinterpretation takes place'.

This is an attempt to meet this deficiency; although at times I have felt that I was in unexplored territory. My Western cultural background and education limit my ability to enter into the traditional African thought world with complete understanding. Furthermore, it is not always possible in such a wide field to determine the validity of one's generalisations, which inevitably have to be made.

2.2 Elements of traditional thought

African traditional religious ideas used to be given the term 'animism'. Willoughby, one of the earliest students of African religions, (1928:1) stated: 'Bantu religion consists of animism and ancestor-worship'. 'Animism', he

defined in a footnote as 'the attribution of a living soul to inanimate objects and natural phenomena'. The term 'animism', from the Latin 'anima' ('breath' or 'soul') is the belief that natural objects or phenomena possess a soul. At best, it describes but one aspect of African traditional religions; and it has come to have a somewhat derogatory connotation, as have such terms as 'primitive' (Levy-Bruhl 1965) and 'primal' (Taylor 1963). Professor Idowu (1973:108), a prominent African theologian from Nigeria, warned against adapting 'all sorts of offhand names' to describe the essential elements of African traditional religions. Included in his 'errors of terminology' was the term 'animism' popularised by Tylor (Idowu 1973:128). He suggested that the term was only appropriate in Africa if it was:

... properly defined as a recognition of the existence of Spirit or spirits as separate from the material ... the recognition of the fact that man's spirit is in communication and communion with the Divine Spirit But it is inappropriate as *the* name for African traditional religion: the derogatory and abusive nomenclature of Africans as 'animists' should cease.

(Idowu 1973:134)

Another prominent African theologian from Kenya, John Mbiti (1969:8) said that 'animism is not an adequate description of [African] religions and it is better for that term to be abandoned once and for all'.

He likewise rejected the use of such terms as 'ancestor worship' and 'magic' - all of which 'show clearly how little the outside world has understood African religions' (1969:10). Shorter (1973:58) said that the use of the term 'animism' should be avoided 'because it is unfair to emphasise the belief in spirits to the exclusion of the supreme being'.

Bosch (1975:3), following E W Smith, suggests that a more satisfactory way of describing the traditional religions of Africa is by using three terms: *theism* - the belief in a supreme being and (sometimes) lesser gods; *spiritism* - the belief in spirits, including ancestors; and *dynamism* - the belief in life-force working through objects and available to (some) people. Because of the loaded connotations of the word 'spiritism' we shall simply refer to this aspect of traditional religions (our main concern in this study) by speaking of the African 'spirit world'. These three aspects are closely intertwined, and cannot be considered in isolation from each other.

Traditional African concepts of God (theism) generally emphasise the transcendence of God, so that some writers speak of a *deus otiosus*, a withdrawn, distant supreme being who is not involved in the everyday affairs of people. These concepts make it necessary that some protection be provided by the spirit world. The shades (ancestors) and other spirits, however, can also be spiteful and vindictive, and so protection is also sought in 'witchcraft' and magic (dynamism). Conversely, occurrences which cannot be adequately explained nor solved by recourse to dynamism or the spirit world are ultimately thrown back on the supreme being (theism). Because the supreme being is the 'one ultimate' of African religion, Idowu (1973:135-136) suggests that the terms 'implicit' or 'diffused monotheism' is descriptive of African traditional religion. This probably too narrowly limits the scope. For the purposes of this study we will use Smith's categories to describe the different aspects of African religion. At the same time we will proceed with caution, as we remember that such categorising is a Western idiosyncrasy. African religion is profoundly holistic and cannot really be put into boxes. In the rather philosophical but graphic words of Taylor (1963:73), African traditional religion is that: 'divine involvement ... the immanence that creates the underlying unity of all things ... an all-pervasive potency in every element and every creature'. And so we should say that African religion is *at the same time* theistic, 'spiritistic' and dynamistic.

2.3 The supreme being

As far as theism is concerned, traditional African views of God reveal a certain ambivalence: the supreme being is at the same time very near (immanent) and very far away (transcendent). These irreconcilable opposites form the heart of African theism, at least to Western observers.

But while everywhere there seems to be an underlying conviction that such a God *is*, it is accompanied, and usually overwhelmed, by the pragmatic knowledge that such a God has gone away ... it is man, not God, whose voice calls through the desolate garden, Where art thou?

(Taylor 1963:84)

On the other hand, Mbiti (1969:32) says that:

the attribute of God's transcendence must be balanced with that of His immanence, since these two are paradoxically complementary Many foreign writers have gone astray here, in emphasising God's remoteness to the exclusion of His nearness.

Perhaps it is true to say that African observers themselves will acknowledge that God in traditional religion is predominantly transcendent; even Idowu (1973:153), that great polemicist for African traditional religion, says that Africans place 'strong emphasis' on the transcendence of God. This overriding concept of the transcendence of God usually means that most of the time the supreme being is remote from the everyday affairs of people. Because of this, he does not interfere with or harass humans, and is regarded as 'good'. But because of his simultaneous nearness, there are times (albeit infrequent) when people live in dread of an unpredictable God who may cause calamity and distress. Mbiti (1969:43-45) cites several examples in African societies where God is regarded as the ultimate source of affliction, misfortune, diseases, death and national calamities. African concepts of God are true to the holistic world view in which they are immersed.

The African God is not only present and absent, near and far; He is also good and bad. Indeed it is the combination of these two qualities in African thought which creates the real problem of the African idea of God.

(McVeigh 1974:128)

The underlying fatalism which characterises the African world view means that the real concept of the supreme being is that he is too near for human comfort. McVeigh (1974:133) considers that this might be the real reason for: 'His being pushed to the periphery of human consciousness ... a God who so near as to control man's destiny absolutely is a difficult God to live with, a God from whom one may wish to flee'.

This view of McVeigh, however, may be too much of a Western projection of the African concept of God. In Africa, it is usually man and not God who is the author of evil. The evil wizard or witch is the one to be feared in traditional Africa, and from whom protection must be sought. Pneumatology in Africa does not so much have to correct a mistaken theism as to provide answers for this very real fear of evil.

2.4 Dynamism and the spirit world

We shall return to the other two elements of African traditional thought in following chapters, and what follows will be a brief preview. When there is uncertainty about the traditional African's position in relation to the Supreme Being, when the fear of evil is overwhelming, and when trouble in any form arises, one will often need outside assistance. One needs strengthening against the uncertainty and unpredictabilities of life. The traditional diviners are specialists in this field; and very often they will provide the answers that the person in trouble seeks, or a remedy for the restoration of lost power. Dynamism - the concept of power - will be discussed in relation to traditional and African Christian ideas of power.

Often the diviner will instruct the afflicted to give attention to the ancestor cult in order to resolve the problem. Perhaps an ancestor feels neglected, and his surviving family has not fulfilled their traditional responsibilities. Usually the ancestor is viewed as nearer to God than living relatives are. But there are times when neither the traditional diviners (dynamism) nor the ancestors (the spirit world) will appear to solve the problem. One is then forced to take the problem to the Supreme Being; but this is the last resort. Dynamism, the spirit world and African theism are all part of the holistic, integrated world view, and are therefore inseparable. The spirit world will be viewed further in a comprehensive chapter dealing with the existential needs that are a consequence of the traditional view, and how an attempt is made to provide for those needs in African Christianity.

3 AFRICAN PSYCHOLOGY

3.1 The holistic view of humankind

Western theology has defined the biblical view of humankind as being either dichotomous (body and spirit or soul) or trichotomous (body, soul or mind, and spirit or soul). But the biblical view of humankind, like that of the African, is holistic. A person is an integrated whole, and not just the sum total of the parts. Placide Tempels (1959:96) has warned of the futility of trying to understand African psychology (with which he was well acquainted) by means of Western categories: 'many of the subdivisions by which we Europeans set such store have no equivalent in Bantu thought'. Incidentally, in South Africa it is necessary to point out that Tempels used the word 'Bantu' purely in a neutral manner as an anthropological term, long before a political system here abused it to discriminate between so-called 'ethnic groups', resulting in the term becoming one associated with oppression.

Jahn (1961:97) speaks of the 'systematic unity of views and attitudes that often appear irreconcilable in European terms'. We have encountered this seemingly irreconcilable dilemma in the African view of God; it is no less apparent in the African concept of humankind. We must therefore anticipate that in discussing such concepts as 'soul' and 'spirit', and even 'power' (or 'life-force'), Western ideas and categories are inadequate to describe what is conceived of in an African world view. We know, for example, that to divide a person into clearly defined categories such as 'spiritual' and 'physical' is foreign to African thought.

3.2 The 'scattered self'

Taylor (1963:56) uses this expression to describe the complexity of the ideas of humankind in Africa. The 'scattered self' is illustrated by a Twi proverb 'The spirit of man is without boundaries'. This complexity is seen in the different words used to describe a person in different parts of Africa. Among the Dinka:

The part of man which is viewed as immortal is termed *atiap*, a word that means both ghost and shadow. It is restricted in its usage to the spirit of the dead. Yet *atiap* may be replaced by *pir* which means life, movement or vitality, or *wei*, which means spirit, or with a slight change of accent and vowel, breath. But the centre of man's character and manners is *piou*, which means heart. This too is immortal.

(Dickson & Ellingworth (eds) 1972:101)

Taylor (1963:59-61) speaks of what he terms the 'power-force' and the 'life-force' or 'life-soul', and the 'individual-soul' which is the part of the self which lives on as a spirit after death. Several African peoples, however, distinguish between the 'individual-soul' which is an element of a living person, and that which belongs to the 'living-dead' or ancestor. Berglund (1976:89) says that among the Zulus the *ithongo*, the ancestor who manifests through dreams, is distinct from the *idlozi*, the individual-soul. Taylor (1963:62) points out another constituent of a person 'almost universally recognised' which he calls the 'transcendent-soul'. This 'signifies that which a man has in common with God himself and receives directly from him'. This 'transcendent-soul' is known in many Bantu languages as *moya*. Mostert (1986:86), speaking from his knowledge of the Zulu, says:

Umoya, as well as *umphefumulo*, as designation of spirit, stands against *umzimba* (the perishable, decomposable entity) as that force which keeps man alive, the vital force in man's existence. Apart from it man is dead. *Umoya* in this sense is source of man's strength.

In the same place Mostert defines *isithunzi* as 'a person's typical personality or force of character, the person as an "I"'. This *isithunzi* combines with the *umoya* after death to form the *idlozi*. Berglund (1976:85), however, points out that the term *umoya* was probably given emphasis by Christian missionaries as a translation for the biblical 'spirit', and thus generally refers to the Holy Spirit. 'Traditionally, *umoya* is air and wind'; and this meaning is in common use in African languages today. So too, Berglund (1976:84) indicates that there is a fair degree of confusion amongst Christians and traditionalists alike concerning the use and meaning of the Zulu word *umphefumulo*, traditionally meaning breath. One suspects that the confusion might stem from the fact that both Hebrew and Greek have one word for breath, wind (air) and spirit. Western distinctions between soul and spirit cannot simply be translated into African languages - as the missionaries did with *umphefumulo* and *umoya* in Zulu. It is interesting that Vilakazi (1986:106) does not make such a distinction: 'when a Zulu says: *umoya* or *umphefumulo usuphumile* that is, the spirit or soul has left the body, he means that the person is dead and what is left is the flesh It is the 'spirit' or 'soul' which is the principle of life'.

Mönnig (1967:48) struggles with the same issues in his anthropological study of the Pedi: 'a person - *motho* - consists of a body - *mmele* - of a soul - *moya* and a spirit - *seriti* They are clearly distinguishable from one another but do also overlap, and are closely associated with one another'.

At first glance this seems like an oversimplification, but on reading on it is apparent that Mönnig (1967:49) is himself aware of the difficulties involved in translating African traditional thought into Western concepts. According to him, *moya* is in Pedi thought associated with (but not synonymous with) a person's breath, and with air or wind. *Moya* is 'not easily distinguishable from *bophelo* - life'. *Moya* is therefore 'the very essence of human life' and yet it 'has no independent existence of its own'. Significantly, *moya* is 'a completely personal entity. No other form of life or natural object is attributed with the possession of *moya*'. The word *seriti* is 'closely connected with both shadow and reflection'. Then he says: 'Although the Pedi *do not so neatly distinguish between or co-ordinate* [emphasis mine] the conception of *moya* and *seriti*, it is apparent that at death ... *seriti* is the visual appearance of the soul' (1967:50).

Furthermore, it seems that *seriti* is also closely connected to Tempels' concept of 'life-force': 'Not only can one change and strengthen one's own *seriti*, but other people can also affect one's *seriti*' (1967:51). In this whole discussion Mönning seems to have succumbed to his natural tendency to be too precisely analytical, and to have missed the overriding importance of the *holistic* view of man in the universe. Nevertheless, his analysis is illuminating. When I discussed the meaning of *seriti* with a Pedi informant, it was pointed out that the word is mostly used today to describe 'personality' or 'dignity'. Setiloane (1976:40) has made the same connection between *seriti* and 'vital force', but has also defined the term as referring to the concept of personality. Berglund (1976:82) has not overlooked the importance of holism in Zulu thought: 'The unity within man is underlined far more emphatically and consciously than is any division of a human into a possible material and visible part and a spiritual and invisible part'.

Mbiti (1971:130) gives us the Akamba concept of man; and it is no less confusing for Western minds to grasp: 'Man (*mundu*) is composed of the body (*mwii*), spirit or breath (*veva*), heart (*ngoo*), life (*thayu*), and mind or intellect (*kiliko, kilililikanu*). We need to bear in mind, however, that these are academic distinctions'. Mbiti tends to translate African concepts of man into Western theological terms, which in the light of all that has been said thus far, is unsatisfactory. Thus he considers that African peoples see man in two main parts: the physical and the non-physical, and that this is a 'universal belief among all African peoples' (1971:132). Mbiti does not emphasise the essential unity of man in African traditional thought in his attempt to make this acceptable to Western theology. To my mind, this is the main weakness of his approach.

Taylor (1963:63) warns:

It is tempting to see a profound understanding of the complex self emerging from this grouping of linked symbols Let Western minds make their inductive and precious generalisations; Africa, if she is true to herself, remains stubbornly inarticulate.

3.3 The holistic universe

Nevertheless, it is important that we remember the emphasis on holism in African psychology, or African spirituality if you like. Levi-Bruhl (1965:113)

puts it like this: 'there is no spiritual reality which is not a complete being, that is, a concrete thing, with a bodily form, even if this be invisible, intangible, without consistency or density'.

We should hesitate to accept any clear divisions in the essential being of a person in African traditional thought. The 'spirit' is not an invisible, incorporeal entity that can exist alone; it is the whole person. The various manifestations of the 'spirit' only reinforce the belief that it is visible, tangible and real - not abstract and 'spiritual' in the Western sense of the word. As Vilakazi (1986:105) points out: '*umoya* and *umphefumulo* can also be used synonymously, depending on the context; and the rigid categories which Oosthuizen introduces are false and, indeed, misleading'.

Furthermore, the extremely significant point has been made that whatever the nature of a person's inner being in African thought, it may not in any sense be termed 'impersonal'. The relevance of this to the African understanding of the Holy Spirit is of utmost importance. A person is inextricably bound up with everything that happens in the universe; it is a personal universe. It is not possible for a person with a traditional African understanding of reality to confuse the Holy Spirit with some sort of mysterious, intangible and manipulable force that exists somehow outside of oneself. Such a creature does not exist in the African thought world. God has not 'left himself without testimony' (Acts 14:17) in traditional Africa!

4 AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL PUBLICATIONS

4.1 African and Black Theology

I am using the term 'African Theology' here as a more general description of the various theological disciplines as they appear in Africa (Fashole-Luke 1976:138). Daneel (1989b:xxx) says that it is 'becoming increasingly important' for 'those of us living in Africa, whatever our cultural background ... to become African theologians, consciously doing *African theology*'. The term 'Black Theology' has a more specialised meaning; this will therefore be seen as a different facet of African Theology. There exists a somewhat uneasy tension between them, not yet altogether resolved; although Black theologians in South Africa today tend to see their theology and African Theology as having a common basis (Boesak 1977:37; Tutu 1987:54).

We must agree with Mbiti (1976:8) when he says that 'half of today's Christendom lies outside the fenced cloisters of traditional theology'. This, of course, includes Africa. Traditional Western theology is in fact 'largely ignorant' and 'often embarrassingly impotent' when it comes to meeting the human needs of Africa and the rest of the Third World. African theologians, on the other hand, have largely gone in other directions: Mbiti, Idowu and Setiloane, for example, concentrate on 'African Theology' in the narrower religiocultural sense - which often involves casting traditional African religions within a Western academic and theological framework. Ostensibly, African Theology is 'an attempt to give African expression to the Christian faith within a theological framework' (Ukpong 1984:501). And yet, very little attention has been paid to the subject of pneumatology.

Other African theologians, particularly those concerned with the current struggle in South Africa, are especially concerned with 'Black Theology' and 'liberation theology' - political, social and economic liberation being considered the urgent issues needing theological appraisal. They often consider the type of 'African Theology' which is orientated to traditional religions to be somewhat irrelevant to these far more pressing issues. Schoffeleers (1988:102) says that the conflict between a religiocultural African Theology and a sociopolitical Black Theology arises because they have different points of departure. The former derived from a 'peasant culture'; whereas the latter 'is essentially an urban creation'. This may, however, be rather oversimplifying the matter, for Blacks in South Africa cannot always be rigidly categorised as either 'urban' or 'rural'. Nevertheless, because of the predominant role played by urban Blacks in the freedom struggle in South Africa, it is understandable that Black Theology should predominate, almost at the expense of African Theology. And yet, Daneel (1989b:xxxi) says that all African Theology contains the 'dimension of liberation ... in varying forms', and that this is particularly evident in the contribution of the independent churches towards an African theology. The urgent issues being addressed by Black Theology does not mean that those issues being addressed by African Theology (in its more restricted sense) are not therefore relevant, because they do not appear to be as urgent. In fact, it is doubtful whether any Black theologians in South Africa today would disagree.

4.2 The beginnings at Ibadan, 1966

A perusal of some leading publications concerned with contextualising theology in Africa indicates the probability that African Christian theologians have largely left unaddressed the subject of Christian pneumatology, and the need for a theology that will be relevant to the African spirit world. The topic is

indeed only touched on here and there. One of the earliest consultations on African theology was held in Ibadan, Nigeria in 1966 under the auspices of the All Africa Conference of Churches (Dickson & Ellingworth 1969). The theme 'Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs' was dealt with by various African theologians. Most of the participants delivered papers that emphasised traditional African beliefs, but said little about the relationship with the biblical revelation. Ezeanya (1969:45-46), a Catholic, suggested that the belief in spirits and the ancestors can easily be adapted to the doctrines of angels and of the Communion of the Saints: 'The strong attachment to ancestors makes it easy to promote both devotion to the saints and prayers for the departed ones'.

These ideas are not usually acceptable to most Spirit-type churches nor to many African Protestants. One of the most significant papers given at this consultation was that of Mulago (1969:157-158) who built on Temples' 'vital force' with his 'vital participation'. Mulago concluded:

We are convinced that the Bantu principle of vital participation can become the basis of a specifically African theological structure Communion as participation in the same life and the same means of life will, we believe, be the centre of this ecclesiological theology.

4.3 Kampala and Mapumulo, 1972

Fashole-Luke (1976:144) considers the consultation held in Kampala in 1972 by the All Africa Conference of Churches to be one of the most significant in reflecting on a relevant theology in Africa, a theology that would be directly related to the life of the Christian community. The consultation held at Mapumulo, Natal in the same year on a 'Relevant Theology for Africa' came to the conclusion, 'We do not seem to have been able to reach a clarity on what a Relevant Theology for Africa ought to be' (Becken 1973:191). Lediga (1973:30-31) spoke of the 'African Church Cult' of the 'Pentecostal-sectarian movement' and suggested that the injunction in the Bible towards 'faith-healing and spiritual powers of prophecy and divination' was something which 'speaks directly and simply to the African' - in contrast to the Christian theologian who 'confuses the whole issue because he is academic and philosophical'. Mayatula (1973:175), a Spirit-type church minister said that the African independent churches were a genuine expression of African theology, and that the Spirit-type church provided 'psychological liberation' for the black person. Other

delegates spoke on various subjects, but apart from these contributions of Lediga and Mayatula and one other paper on the independent churches, there was little said about pneumatology in Africa.

4.4 Dar es Salaam, 1976

In Dar es Salaam in August 1976 the 'Ecumenical Dialogue of Third World Theologians' met to discuss the significance of theology in Africa and other parts of the Third World. It is significant to note the emphases of this conference as delineated by the African participants. Those who spoke on behalf of Black South Africans (Manas Buthelezi and Boesak) concentrated on Black Theology and its implications of liberation from oppression. Buthelezi (1978:56-65), one of the first protagonists of Black Theology in South Africa, made a particularly devastating attack on missionaries with guilty consciences who attempt to produce 'indigenous theology' as a means of solving 'their own psychological hang-ups'. He suggested that a concentration on such objective phenomena as an African traditional world view - or what he termed an 'ethnographical approach' - caused African Theology to 'remain incarnated within the orbits of a past African world view and in the process miss present-day Africans and their existential situation' (1978:65).

In his context of the South African Black in an oppressive society, Buthelezi is right in emphasising the need for a theology that is relevant to this pressing existential need. But he has mistakenly assumed that the 'ethnographical approach' is a static one. He has probably not given sufficient cognisance to those missionaries who have sought to understand the *present* thought world of African people in order to more effectively contextualise the Christian message. He said that we should look at rectifying the reasons for the lack of African theologians rather than debate what the content of African theology should be (1978:73). Buthelezi proposed an 'anthropological' approach instead, which sought to theologise from the premise of the real-life situation of the African person. Both Buthelezi and Boesak (1978:76-93) suggested that Black Theology cannot be divorced from African Theology.

Buthelezi was perhaps making too fine a distinction between 'ethnographic' and 'anthropological' approaches; and therefore his view is too radical. Can one commence theology from the real-life situation of African people without taking into account their world view and felt needs? These two approaches cannot really be polarised. One of the founders of Black Theology, James

Cone (1979:184) indicates that both approaches are legitimate and necessary: 'The relation between indigenisation and liberation does not have to be antagonistic. In fact, we need both emphases'.

Other participants in the Dar es Salaam conference reflected on their own situations. It seems that most of the debate around an African theology concerns theologising in African and how to do it, rather than *what* specifically are the peculiarly African issues that need to be addressed. Nyamiti (1978:44) outlined the real situation: 'African theology is still in its early beginnings and up to the present moment the subject has mostly been dealt with in an elemental manner, without the breadth or profundity of a mature scientific discipline'. Dickson's brief paper commenced, 'the discussions are at too early a stage to give indications of theological trends' (1976:46).

One is left with a distinct impression of a theological groping in the dark. Apart from the South African contributions with their existential situations of conflict, there seemed to be no clear vision of exactly where African theology was heading.

4.5 Accra, 1977

In December 1977 the 'Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians' was held in Accra, Ghana. Appiah-Kubi (1979:viii) set the tone in his preface by referring to what African theology should *do*: to make theology 'a living, dynamic, active and creative reality in our societies'. The papers from the Conference were, however, 'the tip of an iceberg', for there was an 'enormous task facing African theology' (1979:ix). Interestingly, Kalu (1979:17) commenced his paper by referring to the African spirit world. He made the interesting assertion that this was the point of departure for African theology, differing so drastically from the Western world view of the missionaries, which resulted in what he called 'the inadequate understanding of the dynamics of the home base'. His conclusion: 'Christianity had spread enormously in Africa, but the resultant church is basically weak. Christianity must be traditionalized in African culture so that the dead wood in both will be destroyed and a new form can emerge' (1979:21).

In the same Conference, Setiloane's (1979:59-65) somewhat provocative paper 'Where are We in African Theology?', which postulated some of his views as a radical African theologian, concluded with a passing reference to pneumatology. He feared that any African theological perspective of the Holy Spirit

might be an 'endorsement of the Hellenically-originated trinitarianism of the early church Pneumatology, so-called, should from an African perspective, be prepared to look squarely at and even dismantle the western trinitarian formula of Divinity' (1979:64-65).

This proposal Setiloane made from his philosophical (and somewhat romanticised) view of the supreme being according to the traditional religions. He wants to free African Theology from Western domination, and thus he criticises J V Taylor's attempts to write on African Theology. In his view, the African concept of God is 'much higher' than the Western Christian one. He comes across as perhaps the most radical of African theologians, going further than Idowu does in proposing African traditional religions as superior to Western Christianity. Yet Setiloane (1975:85) cannot himself escape the influence of Westernism in his writings, particularly Rudolf Otto's idea of the irrational encounter with God as the 'wholly other'. And as Daneel (1989b:115) has pointed out, Setiloane 'does not explain the encounter between *Modimo*, as experienced by the Sotho-Tswana, and the biblical *Yahweh*'. I think that he has missed the point here. Rather than occupying ourselves with speculation as to who the Holy Spirit *is* in academic and rather Western theological terms, we should be concerned to postulate what the Holy Spirit *does* in interacting with the existential spirit world of the African. Here the Spirit-type churches have got on with the job; and in their experience of encounter and confrontation between the Spirit of God and the African spirit world, they have left the armchair academics behind.

The Catholic Bishop Tshibangu (1979:77) of Zaïre also mentioned the African spirit world in his paper 'The Task of African Theologians'. Characteristic of several theologians at this conference he posed a number of unanswered questions. He asked, for example, whether use should be made of 'the data of traditional African religion' to answer 'any problems' in an African context, but simply said that this question must be solved by African theologians. Mbiti (1979:88-90) also outlined various fields in which African theologising was going on and made no direct reference to the African spirit world. He did, however, make the refreshing and crucial comment that African theology should remain close to the Scriptures. This, he said, the independent churches had done; but he found it 'a very alarming omission' that African liberation theology had neglected a biblical basis. Oduyoye (1979:111) spoke of 'the poverty of the liturgy and theology emanating from European and American Christianity. They do not touch the African soul at its depths'. This lack was to be filled by African traditional religion, including ancestor cults.

Apart from a paper on the independent churches by Appiah-Kubi (1979:117), there was little else in this consultation that has bearing on our subject. The tension between the proponents of 'African Theology' and 'Black Theology' was somewhat alleviated at this time, particularly through the paper given by James Cone, to which we have already referred.

One other significant publication appeared in 1979 by John Pobee, entitled 'Toward an African Theology', which was intended as 'a dialogue between Christianity and African traditional culture' (1979:43) - in this case particularly the Akan culture of Ghana with which Pobee is familiar. As far as a theological contribution is concerned, Pobee restricted himself to a discussion of various approaches to traditional religion, Christology, sin and evil, Christian marriage, and 'the ethics of power' - in this sense, the use of authority in church and state. Apart from a description of the Akan spirit world (1979:45-52) Pobee did not really tackle the problem of what the Christian approach to the traditional spirit world should be.

Thus it is that African theologians have tended to move in directions which are usually safely within the theological orbit of the historical (Western) church in which they are grounded. Those that have gone beyond this orbit have tended to be either propagating Black Theology, or else be advocating a return to traditional concepts as superior to the Christian revelation as perceived by the West. The African spirit world in all its vastness, as a subject to which Christian theology must relate, is either neglected or overlooked. In fact, it seems that far more has been said about how African Christian theologising should be done rather than what it actually says. There appears to be a vacuum in African Christian theology - and, by implication, in the Western theology imported to Africa - particularly in the realm of pneumatology. It is precisely to fill this vacuum that the 'Spirit-type' churches have emerged. They are in fact *doing* a certain type of African theology, which after all, should not be 'concerned with clarifying doctrines, but with helping the African faithful to live Christianity, and making the gospel message and Christian doctrines meaningful to their life situation' (Ukpong 1984:512).