CHAPTER TWO

The Holy Spirit and African Pentecostalism

1 THE RISE OF SPIRIT-TYPE CHURCHES

1.1 The African roots of Pentecostalism

It has been substantiated fairly conclusively that most Spirit-type churches in Southern Africa owe their origins to Wakkerstroom in the South Eastern Transvaal, to Zion City in Illinois, USA (Sundkler 1976:13-67), and to Los Angeles, California. In Zion City John Alexander Dowie reigned as ‘First Apostle’ over a new movement called the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion. P L Le Roux, a former Dutch Reformed missionary living in Wakkerstroom, joined this movement in 1903. In fact, the ‘Zion’ converts of P L Le Roux and his associates were the source out of which ‘eventually the whole series of Zionist Churches have emerged’ (Sundkler 1961:48). It is important to note Sundkler’s (1976:51) well-researched observation of the continuity between the early Zionist movement and the Pentecostal movement in South Africa.

Le Roux was to discover, on the arrival in 1908 of the American Pentecostal missionaries led by John G Lake (formerly a follower of Dowie), that ‘Zion taught immersion and divine healing, but NOT Pentecost’ (Sundkler 1961:48). The Pentecostal movement was generated in a Black church in Azusa Street, Los Angeles, where the emphasis on the ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ with the ‘initial evidence’ of speaking in tongues was propagated by a preacher named William Seymour. Azuza Street became the centre to which people flocked, ‘received the Spirit’, and then went carrying the message of ‘Pentecost’ all over
the world, reaching fifty nations within two years (MacRobert 1988:56, 81). Lake and other American Pentecostal missionaries to South Africa received the teaching of ‘Spirit-baptism’ there.

The generation of the whole Pentecostal movement from a Black church, rooted as it was in the American Black slave culture of the 19th Century, is an extremely significant fact which is receiving increasing attention. Many of the early manifestations of Pentecostalism were found in the religious expressions of the slaves and were themselves a reflection of the African religious culture from which they had been abducted. Leonard Lovett said: ‘It may be categorically stated that black Pentecostalism emerged out of the context of the brokenness of black existence ... their holistic view of religion had its roots in African religion’ (MacRobert 1988:77-78).

MacRobert (1988:29) quotes Herskovits who suggested that Holy Spirit possession inspires such manifestations as ‘motor behaviour that is not European but African’. MacRobert continues to say that ‘rhythmic hand clapping, the antiphonal participation of the congregation in the sermon, the immediacy of God in the services and baptism by immersion, are all survivals of Africanisms’.

With much of this analysis I would agree, except that I would be more cautious in describing some of these practices which have biblical origins as simply ‘survivals of Africanisms’. What we have here rather, is an adaptive remoulding of African religious practices in a decidedly Christian context.

The significant fact is that there was more continuity between African traditional religious practices and the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostalism than has previously been realised. The rise of Western Pentecostalism gave a certain authenticity to American Black holistic Christianity with its motor manifestations. This is not at all to imply that early Pentecostals had a syncretistic understanding of the Holy Spirit. Yet the Pentecostalism imported to South Africa in 1908 certainly had African roots which made it easier for it to flourish in African soil.

1.2 Pentecostals and Zionists

With the coming of the American missionaries Lake, Hezmalhalch and others, Le Roux and his African Zionists now joined the Pentecostal movement, which soon became known as the Apostolic Faith Mission, the name of the church in Los Angeles. Le Roux became president of the A F M in 1915. The Africans wanted to retain the name ‘Zion’; and so the African church was called the
Zion Apostolic Church (Sundkler 1961:48). Estrangement between the Black Pentecostals and the Whites occurred gradually. The earliest known secession was only in 1917, when Elias Mahlangu (one of the original Zionists) founded the Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa. Out of this church Edward of Basutoland’s (now Lesotho) Zion Apostolic Faith Mission seceded in 1920; and Engenas Lekganyane’s Zion Christian Church seceded from the latter in 1925 - now the largest African independent church in Southern Africa (Daneel 1971:300; Sundkler 1976:65-66). The line of continuity (with Black and White secessions) is therefore clear. Not only did African Zionists retain most of the doctrines and practices of the Pentecostals, but they also tended to favour the name ‘Apostolic’ as well as ‘Zion’. Daneel (1987:54) notes that: ‘The prevalence of such terms ... in itself indicates that most of them are strongly Pentecostally inclined, or at least give pre-eminence to the work of the Holy Spirit’.

Dowie’s group practised threefold immersion; this was retained by the Apostolic Faith Mission and by the Zionist churches. Most other Pentecostal groups follow the Baptists with a single immersion. The practices of speaking in tongues and prophesying were introduced by the Pentecostal movement (and not by Dowie’s movement); these too were retained by the Zionist and Apostolic independent churches. The differences that emerged were mainly external - at least originally. Le Roux and other White Pentecostals objected to the Blacks’ use of external symbols such as staffs and the wearing of uniforms and robes (Sundkler 1976:50-51). In my own experience this controversy continued in White-controlled Black Pentecostal churches in Southern Africa at least until the 1970’s. The Pentecostal group with which I was connected were still struggling then to get rid of the vestiges of external symbols such as uniforms and ‘holy water’ from their congregants, often considered to be caused by ‘Zionist influence’.

This historical digression has been necessary in order to establish the affinity between the present-day Zionists and the Pentecostals, and to further justify a broad use of the term ‘Spirit-type churches’. In fairness to both groups, however, the differences that emerge in later years result in a distinctively ‘Zionist-type’ church and ‘Pentecostal’ church. But these distinctions were not at all clear in the 1920s. A significant number of churches today would probably be classified somewhere between ‘Zionist’ and ‘Pentecostal’. Theologically however, they may all be termed ‘Spirit-type’ churches.
1.3 The Pentecostal connection

The connection between the Pentecostal and the African independent church movement is not confined to Southern Africa. Turner (1967a:10ff; 1967b:3; 1979:125-128) shows how several independent churches in Nigeria (where he has conducted extensive research) were given initial impetus through the Pentecostal movement in America and Britain. The same connection was demonstrated in Ghana (Beckmann 1975:40) and in Tanzania (Welbourn & Ogot 1966:73). Very significant is Turner’s (1976:xvii) statement:

More fundamental, however, are the beliefs lying behind the origins and the practice of these newer independent churches. Their first conviction may be called a pneumatological view of the God of the Scriptures, envisaged as present in power through the Holy Spirit ....

In another place, Turner (1979:122) observes that ‘this pneumatological emphasis and the demand for visible manifestations of the power of the Spirit clearly identify its central features with those of Western pentecostalism’. Martin (1964:11) also connects what she calls ‘American separatism’ with African independent churches in West Africa.

Elsewhere in Africa large independent churches have arisen independently of the Pentecostal movement: notable examples being the Kimbanguist movement in Zaire (Martin sa:3-7), the Harrist churches in the Ivory Coast (Walker 1979:9-15), the Maranke church in Zimbabwe (Daneel 1971:315), and the Legion of Mary in Kenya (Ndiokwere 1981:43). Excepting for the last-named, these churches may also be considered ‘Spirit-type’ churches in their own right, despite notable differences with other Spirit-type churches. The connection with (Western) Pentecostalism is not a universal phenomenon in Spirit-type churches; but it is certainly significant.

2 PNEUMATOLOGICAL GROWTH FACTORS

2.1 The religious factor

Researchers have written much on the factors influencing the origin and growth of the Spirit-type churches (Daneel 1987:68). I intend to isolate only those factors which are relevant to pneumatology. Sociopolitical, economic and ethnic factors had their part to play; but as Turner (in Daneel 1987:71) has pointed out, the main reasons for the rise of these churches were religious
ones. Or as Appiah-Kubi (1979:117-118) puts it, the main reason for their emergence was 'spiritual hunger ... and not political, social, economic, and racial factors'. In particular, the missionaries failed to understand the African world view, in trying to impose Western Christianity on African converts. Barrett (in Daneel 1987:76) considers this to have been ‘a failure in love’. The gospel proclaimed by white missionaries was often superficial and impoverished; it ‘did not even touch on many facets of the life or struggle of the African’ (1987:78). There was no answer to man's concrete physical needs. Maimela (1985:71) remarks that:

A large number of African Christians believe that the church is not interested in their daily misfortunes, illness, encounter with evil and witchcraft, bad luck, poverty, barrenness - in short, all their concrete social problems ... most Africans often do not know what to do with their new, attractive Christian religion and yet one which dismally fails to meet their emotional and spiritual needs.

He observed that ‘the greatest attraction of the so-called Independent churches lies in their open invitation to the Africans to bring their fears and anxieties about witches, sorcerers, bad luck, poverty, illness and all kinds of misfortune to the church leadership’ (1985:71).

The major thrust of Daneel's work among the Shona independent churches in Zimbabwe, particularly as expounded in his second volume of *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches* (1974) is to demonstrate the predominance of religious factors in accounting for the appeal and rapid proliferation of these movements. He highlights these factors, which I would describe as largely pneumatological: the adaptations to traditional rituals and customs, the prophetic practices in detecting and removing malignant medicines and wizardry, and above all, the role of healing and exorcism. The message of deliverance from sickness and from the oppression of evil spirits, and especially the message of receiving the power of the Holy Spirit that enables man to cope in a hostile spirit world, was welcome indeed. In the multitude of factors, this was surely the most significant one! Indeed, it seems that we do not need to look much further than to the pneumatological factor as it manifests itself in healing, exorcism and in all aspects of life, to discover the central reason for the attractiveness of the Spirit-type churches to African people. This was a religion that offered solutions to all of life's problems, and not just the 'spiritual' ones - it absorbed man's whole day, and not just his Sunday! 'The most significant and unique aspect of these churches', comments Appiah-Kubi (1979:118),
... is that they seek to fulfil that which is lacking in the Euro-American missionary churches, that is, to provide forms of worship that satisfy both spiritually and emotionally and to enable Christianity to cover every area of human life and fulfil all human needs.

Or as some South African independent church leaders put it:

What makes us feel uncomfortable in the White Churches, more than anything else, is the apparent lack of the Spirit in these Churches. Generally their Sunday services are very stiff and formal. There is very little spontaneity or freedom to enable the Spirit to take over, to move people and to heal them.

(Institute for Contextual Theology 1985:27)

The Spirit-type churches provide the African man with more divine involvement than his traditional religion did, and go much further towards meeting his daily existential needs. They fill the vacuum left by Western Christianity, and by African Christian theology. The translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular reinforced the conviction 'that there was in Scripture a spontaneity, a vitality and a dynamic which was apparently lacking in the rigid structures of the missionary agencies' (Daneel 1987:84-85).

2.2 The spiritual leaders

Furthermore, we must not overlook the fact that most Spirit-type churches were founded by 'powerful' people of God, charismatic leaders who attracted followers through their preaching and healings. This too was attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit. Daneel (1971:292) shows how the Zimbabwe Zionist leader Mutendi was first attracted to the Sotho Zionists in the Transvaal because they 'had' the Spirit, and because

... the Zionist prophetic activities with their revelatory spells of Spirit-possession were familiar against the background of Shona divination. The inclusion in the Church of these indigenised practices ... fulfilled a basic religious need and was to become one of the main pivots of Mutendi's popularity ...
Similarly, it was after the Holy Spirit came upon Johane Maranke in 1932 that the largest independent Church in Zimbabwe, the African Apostolic Church, was born (Daneel 1971:319). Daneel (1971:321) comments:

Johane received his full charter for the new church ... directly from the Holy Spirit. The emphasis on the Holy Spirit is important for an understanding of the ideology within the Apostolic movement. All the laws and customs within the Church are justified with direct references to the inspiration and command of the Holy Spirit.

Daneel (1974:28) points out later that the main criticism made by Spirit-type churches in Zimbabwe against mission churches is their 'neglect of the Holy Spirit', and that some Apostolic leaders in particular accuse the mission churches of actually suppressing the work of the Spirit. Kimbanguism, the largest independent church movement in Zaire (and the largest in Africa) began because a prophet arose upon whom the Holy Spirit had come, who had power to heal the sick. Simon Kimbangu was such a man, who ascribed his miraculous gifts to the Holy Spirit (Andersson 1958:51-59). And 'the most important factor in the development of Kimbanguism was the implicit faith of the people in the prophet's ability to heal the sick' (1958:56). A Kimbanguist theologian, Diakanua Ndofunsu (1978:578), says: 'What is more He (God) prepares in them (a people) a true coming of the Holy Spirit, whom God will put into a person called Kimbangu ... the Spirit is made visible through the person of the prophet ...'. Martin, (1964:113) speaking of the Zionist movement in Southern Africa says that 'the prophet is a man of the Spirit, a man of power through whom power is bestowed upon his followers' (1964:113). It is evident that this concept of the 'man of the Spirit' was a leading factor in the origin and growth of the Spirit-type churches.

3 PNEUMATOLOGY IN SPIRIT-TYPE CHURCHES

3.1 The acting out of theology

Spirit-type churches seldom have an elaborately worked-out theology. For this reason we can expect to find no formulated pneumatology such as pertains to some Western churches. Nevertheless, the Spirit-type churches in Africa have a distinct contribution to make to African Christian theology, particularly in the realm of pneumatology. Mbiti (1976:16) says that the independent churches are 'ultimately an expression of theological protest'. Fashole-Luke (1976:144) says that they 'constitute part of the raw material for the building of
African Christian theologies'. He points out quite rightly that a careful and critical study needs to be made of these churches 'to assess their value for the development of African theology' (1976:148). Burgess Carr (1976:162) observes that the independent churches demonstrate that 'African theology comes to life in music and song, prayers and sacramental acts of healing and exorcism, art forms and architecture, liturgy and dress, church structures and community life'. Hastings (1976:54) comments that the independent churches 'have little of an explicit theology ... but they have a praxis and a spirituality in which a theology is profoundly implicit'.

The fact that Spirit-type churches may have no formal theology does not mean that they have none at all. In fact, as Becken (1973:3) observes, theology is 'our human response to God's Word'. The independent African bishop who lays hands on the sick, and his congregation who are in the rituals of their worship, are enacting theology. In fact, the acting out of theology is at least as important as the taking it in at a seminary or university! We need to see that the Spirit-type churches have responded to God's Word to them in a particular way. Their interpretation of the working of the Holy Spirit as emphasised in the daily life and practices of their churches is theology, or more precisely, pneumatology. And in this respect they have an extremely significant part to play in the formulating of African theology. Indeed, says Ukpong (1984:520) 'the main goal of African theology is to make Christianity attain African expression ... to become a way of life to Africans, Christianity must be made relevant to and expressive of the way they live and think' (1984:520). This is precisely what the independent churches (albeit largely unconsciously) have done. In many respects they have attained the goals towards which African theology is still struggling.

It is important that anyone seeking to do Christian theology in Africa look at the Spirit-type churches closely to see this authentically African expression of pneumatology. In the process we may also discover the shortcomings of Western pneumatology in Africa. Ndiokwere (1981:276) says that the Spirit-type churches

... should be seen as a response of the Holy Spirit to the questioning spirit of man, in a situation where the existing churches were not helping the people to meet their needs ... a response to the spiritually unsatisfactory answers provided by the Mission Churches to the religious longings of Africans. It was to manifest that the Holy Spirit can speak directly to Africans.
Ndikwere’s commendable study has given emphasis to the prominent role played by the Holy Spirit in the life and faith of the independent churches he discusses (1981:77). We shall see that it is specifically in the various manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the Spirit-type churches that a valuable contribution to African Christian pneumatology is seen, rather than in any theologising. Nevertheless, we also need to discover what are the beliefs concerning the Holy Spirit in these churches. Having dispensed with the theory, we shall then observe that it is in the practice of the gifts of the Spirit that the underlying theory is exhibited.

3.2 The central focus on the Spirit

Sundkler (1961:242) says that the Holy Spirit, Umoya, is ‘the fundamental concept in Zionist ideology’. Similarly, Armitage (1976:336) observes that in the Swazi Zionist Churches the Holy Spirit is seen in all activities as ‘the ambiguous, numinous force that pervades everything’. The African independent churches, in ‘Speaking for Ourselves’ stated ‘if our theology has one central focal point then it is the HOLY SPIRIT’ (Institute for Contextual Theology 1985:26, emphasis in original). Spirit-type churches attach great importance to the ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ - many follow the general Pentecostal preference for the Authorised (King James) Version of the Bible, and in the English constitutions of their churches often state words like ‘the Baptism of the believers in the Holy Ghost is indicated by the initial physical signs of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of the God (sic) gives them utterance’ (in Sundkler 1961:243).

This is a classic statement of belief common to many Western Pentecostal churches with which I am familiar. It would seem that at least the official teaching of most Spirit-type churches in Southern Africa regarding the Holy Spirit has a close affinity to that of Western Pentecostalism - in some cases it is word-for-word. In practice however, the differences that emerge have to do with the African churches’ fundamental orientation to the spirit world. The theoretical affinity should not surprise us when we consider the common historical roots. Most Spirit-type churches declare themselves solidly ‘orthodox’ when it comes to the Trinity.

In other parts of Africa there is evidence of less affinity to Pentecostalism; although the connection remains. The Musama Disco Christo Church, for example, displays its Methodist origins in its statement of beliefs, with significant additions. This church, the largest Spirit-type church in Ghana (Baëta 1962:60), officially states its belief in the Trinity, and that ‘the Holy Spirit can
declare its presence emotionally and solemnly' (1962:153). The New Testament references that follow this statement include most proof-texts used by Pentecostals for their teaching of the 'baptism in the Spirit'. The Ghana Apostolic Church declares, in true Pentecostal fashion, its belief in 'the baptism of the Holy Ghost for believers, with signs following' (1962:1). In Nigeria the Church of the Lord (Aladura) reveals its origins particularly in its ‘Holy Litany’ (Turner 1967b:161) and in its ‘Catechism’ (1967b:169). Both exhibit similarities to the Anglican ‘Book of Common Prayer’; but again, there are striking differences (1967b:170). The catechism reveals trinitarianism; but references to the Holy Spirit in these documents are incidental; and there is a conspicuous absence of references to the ‘baptism in the Spirit’. But as Turner (1967b:339) points out, ‘the pneumatological interest is revealed in more informal ways: in the incidental publications ... in the practical life of the church... and in the minds of most members ...’.

Similarly, the Kimbanguist ‘Statement of Theology’ declares ‘a trinitarian God’ (Manicom 1979:26); and quite explicitly rules out any misconceptions regarding the Holy Spirit: ‘The Holy Spirit is far from being a sort of magnetic or electric current which provides energy for the accomplishment of some particular task’ (1979:27). What follows, however, is a deviation from orthodox trinitarian theology:

The third person in God, the Holy Spirit, also has a human likeness, whose body is spiritual and consequently invisible to living men. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are three persons clothed in spiritual bodies (1 Cor 15:44), but existing in the image and likeness of man, himself created to the image of God.

(Manicom 1979:27)

This rather elaborate tendency towards tritheism is not, however, peculiar to Kimbanguism, for in the writings and pronouncements of some fringe-group Pentecostals, the same tendency may be discerned. Very often it is the result of a lack of careful reflection rather than that of deliberate deviation. What is called by Kimbanguists the ‘baptism of fire’, also seen as the ‘baptism in the Spirit’ is regarded as the only necessary baptism - thus the sacrament of baptism is dispensed with (Martin sa:13; Andersson 1958:109; Manicom 1979:37-40). The Kimbanguist Church is unlike any other church in Africa in many respects. Nevertheless, Andersson (1958:109), writing on ‘Ngunza’ doctrine in
the 1930's, which in his work includes Kimbanguism, says 'the most popular article of Ngunza doctrine ... is ... the doctrine of the Spirit'. Behind all the Spirit-type churches in their official pronouncements (or the lack of them) is an awareness of the all-importance and pervasiveness of the Holy Spirit.

3.3 An overemphasis on pneumatology?

Several researchers have observed that what they regard as an overemphasis on pneumatology has resulted in a weak Christology. We cannot spend too much time here; for to adequately evaluate these observations would involve an excursion into the Christological aspects of the Spirit-type churches. This, researchers must still do. Nevertheless, Daneel (1987:258-259) says that a danger is that 'the enormous emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the prophetic groups results in an impoverished Christology .... Indeed, in the heart throb of Zionism we find him (Christ) as healer and Saviour'. Christ is not in these churches relegated to the periphery; in fact, because the Bible constantly acts as a corrective, 'the focus on the Holy Spirit is continually interspersed with and amplified by clear-sighted visions of Jesus Christ' (1987:259).

Daneel (1989a:329-330) has in fact shown that this Christological weakness, if it exists, is replaced through theological training with 'a more balanced perception of the close relationship between the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit'. Stebbing's (1985:95) research into four independent churches in Chipinge, Zimbabwe substantiates that Christ is indeed not neglected in Spirit-type church preaching and in the lives of the leaders and members. Certainly there are exceptions; but generally speaking, Spirit-type churches give Jesus Christ his rightful place in their life and faith. To contend otherwise is to indulge in speculation arising out of misunderstanding of the African world view. Leaders of Spirit-type churches would themselves be the first to acknowledge the centrality of Jesus Christ; and however it may seem to the uninformed Western observer, there is no conscious or unconscious attempt to depart from orthodox Christology. This is in sharp contrast to the writings of some African theologians. To my knowledge, empirical research has not indicated anything to the contrary.

Sundkler (1961:297; 1976:304-305) has had to re-evaluate his rather negative conclusions in this respect as he has learned more about his subjects. Martin (1975:141) has completely changed her position with regard to Kimbanguism, because of her close contact with the movement. She has not, however, significantly changed her earlier views on Zionism in Southern Africa. Referring to the Zion Christian Church in South Africa, she states: 'In such syncretistic
groups the Spirit of God is confused, or identified, with the ancestral spirits, for both can manifest themselves through a certain specially-chosen medium and both can occasion ecstacy. In the same publication, Martin (1975:171) does seem later to modify her position with the following comments:

In the light of what we have observed among the Kimbanguists, the tendencies of the various ‘messianic movements’ in Southern Africa would have to be studied afresh every few years. What still appeared yesterday to be a messianic movement may today already be becoming a church of Jesus Christ on the basis of the ever-renewing Spirit of God.

We must also remember that Martin’s earlier research on ‘messianism’ in Southern Africa was largely based on secondary sources; she did not have the first-hand knowledge based on empirical research that she now has on Kimbanguism.

Oosthuizen seems to have turned around completely in his approach. His earlier works, notably his *Post-Christianity in Africa*, had characterised the African independent churches as ‘post-Christian’ syncretistic movements (Oosthuizen 1968:xii). In one of his more recent publications ‘Religion Alive’ (1986), a symposium of which he is editor, here and there his change of stance is evident with statements like ‘The majority of AIC members are Christians and the greatest need is to be with them at their services and to participate in their activities where they give the lead’ (1986: Preface np). Oosthuizen’s (1986:223-245) own paper on ‘The AIC and the Modernisation Process’ has a remarkable absence of negative evaluations on the whole independent movement, in striking contrast to his earlier polemical writings.

The teaching concerning the Holy Spirit, then, although not clearly enunciated to the satisfaction of Western theological observers, is central to the beliefs and practices of the Spirit-type churches. Any attempt at analysis would probably indicate that Spirit-type churches do not depart from orthodox trinitarian teaching concerning the Holy Spirit, at least not consciously. Pneumatological beliefs and practices are justified by referring to the Bible, which for most Spirit-type churches is the ultimate source of authority. The Holy Spirit speaks to their church leaders and members through the Bible. The major sources of criticism would seem to be more in the realm of pneumatological practices and manifestations, rather than in theory. We will consider now whether these rather negative evaluations are justified in the light of actual pneumatological manifestations and practices as described by various researchers.
3.4 The manifest presence of the Spirit

The *sine qua non* of the Spirit-type churches is the Holy Spirit. He is the one to whom credit is given for everything that takes place. He causes people to ‘receive’ the Spirit, to prophesy, speak in tongues, heal, exorcise demons, have visions and dreams; and generally he directs the life and worship of the church. Turner (1967b:343) writes that in the Aladura churches of Nigeria ecstatic manifestations are accepted ‘as a normal feature of the work of the Spirit, marking the direct access of the individual to the sources of spiritual power’. Unlike Western ‘enthusiastic Christianity’, whose emphasis is in Turner’s view on ‘subjective spiritual experience’, this Nigerian church’s emphasis is on ‘the manifest presence of the Spirit ... and upon the message that is given, the healing that is received, or the evil powers and dangers that are overcome’. This he finds a ‘healthier emphasis’. Daneel (1971:347-348) observes that although there were numerous variations in ritual and doctrine among the Shona Spirit-type churches in Zimbabwe,

... remarkable uniformity emerges on closer examination ... all these groups pay special attention to the work of the Holy Spirit. This is evident not only in sermons but in most ritual activities. The Spirit always manifests his presence through speaking in tongues and through prophetic revelations. The Spirit cleanses the water of ‘Jordan’ for baptism ... the Spirit reveals the hidden sins of novices about to be baptised and inspires the novice during or after baptism. In the name of the Holy Spirit church laws are upheld ... the whole control system within these movements hinges on the professed work of the Holy Spirit.

Nussbaum (1985:69) found that one of the prominent features of all five of the Lesotho independent churches in his research was a ‘direct encounter with the power of the Spirit’. This was ‘tangible proof that God remains in a dynamic relationship with His people through His Spirit’ (1985:83). Armitage (1976:337) notes that:

The ‘Holy Spirit’ gives people (in the Swazi Zionist churches) the mystical and second sense to see things, which is believed to come from the Christian God, and which in former times would have been a sign of possession by ancestral spirits alone; it is also the ultimate authority in divination, and the remedy for spiritual and physical sickness.
So much of the religious activity in the Spirit-type churches is directly attributed to the working of the Holy Spirit by those participating in that activity. Pneumatological manifestations in African Spirit-type churches will now be described. In doing so, it will therefore be assumed that any interpretation of these phenomena will of necessity attempt to understand them as the African participants do: manifestations of the overriding presence of the Spirit of God. As West (1975:188) has pointed out: ‘One of the central problems is to be able to distinguish FORM from CONTENT: although a modern rite may look substantially the same as a traditional rite, it is not necessarily seen in the same light by participants’.

In the absence of evidence to the contrary, and in the light of the fact that no less ‘unusual’ manifestations of the Holy Spirit were experienced in biblical times, we must give the benefit of the doubt to these participants, accepting the manifestations at face value as a genuine response to the working of the Holy Spirit amongst ordinary African people. This is the raw material out of which an authentic African Christian pneumatology can be described. Pneumatology in Africa is enacted at least as much as it is articulated; the enacting of pneumatology is seen in the various and multiplied manifestations of the Holy Spirit.
CHAPTER THREE

The Holy Spirit
in African manifestation

1 RECEIVING THE SPIRIT

1.1 Historical origins of the phenomenon

The initial and subsequent receiving of the Spirit, or what some writers refer to as ‘Spirit possession’, is a fundamental practice in Spirit-type churches. During the last years of the nineteenth century in South Africa, Andrew Murray (Junior) began teaching that the receiving of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion was an ‘enduement of power’ quite distinct from the attainment of Christian character through the fruit of the Spirit. He was not the first to bring this teaching, because throughout church history it has been the position of several groups, including the Montanists, some of the early Methodists, and nineteenth century Americans revivalists such as Finney and Moody; and it was at least suggested in the New Testament. Murray taught also that the sick could be healed through the laying on of hands (Hollenweger 1972:114-115). This teaching on healing was propagated in America by J A Dowie, the ‘grandfather’ of Zionism in South Africa, and Zionism was brought to South Africa in 1904. In 1908 the first Pentecostal missionaries brought the doctrine of the ‘baptism with the Spirit’ with the ‘initial evidence’ of speaking with tongues (Hollenweger 1972:114-115) which, as we have seen, originated in a Black American church. This teaching was enthusiastically received by the Apostolic Faith Mission founded in 1910, and later by the independent Zionist churches (Hollenweger 1972:120-121). One of the American missionaries John
G Lake, described his receiving of the power of the Spirit as 'shocks of power came intermittently, possibly ten seconds apart. They increased in voltage until after a few minutes my frame shook and vibrated under these mighty shocks of power' (Sundkler 1976:52).

A Swedish Pentecostal, quoted by Hollenweger (1972:332-333), relates his experience as follows:

I suddenly felt my shoulder shaking, and there was immediately a feeling like an electric shock from outside which went through my whole body and my whole being. I understood that the holy God had drawn near to me. I felt every limb of the lower half of my body shaking, and I felt involuntary movements and extraordinary power streaming through me. Through this power the shaking of my body grew continually ... My words dissolved in my mouth, and the quiet utterances of my prayer grew louder and changed into a foreign language. I grew dizzy ... I was no longer myself, although I was conscious the whole time of what was happening.

The Pentecostal doctrine followed Murray's teaching but added the insistence on speaking in tongues. Today this is still the position of most Pentecostal churches, which distinguishes them from other churches. It is also for this reason that Hollenweger (1972:149) refers to Zionists in South Africa as 'independent African Pentecostal churches'. Like the Pentecostal churches of Western origin, they too practice a receiving of the power of the Spirit subsequent to, but sometimes simultaneously with, baptism in water (usually by threefold immersion), and practise speaking in tongues.

1.2 Holy Spirit manifestation in Spirit-type churches in Southern Africa

Pauw (1975:300) says that among Xhosa Zionists receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is manifested by various 'extraordinary powers' such as speaking in tongues, visions, dreams, prophecy and healing. He finds these manifestations also present in a more limited fashion in the Assemblies of God groups established by Nicholas Bhengu, a Pentecostal (1975:295). The Zionists emphasise that it is the experience of receiving the Spirit which is the source of true knowledge and power. This means, says Pauw (1975:303) that
... they have direct access to, and the monopoly over, the knowledge hidden to other people - manifested in prophecy, visions and dreams - and to the power by which the spirits and forces that impair, destroy or prevent life are overcome, and health, life and children are assured.

What Pauw (1975:304) calls the 'extreme emotionalism' of the Zionists is expressed through 'frenzied dancing, clapping of hands, shouting, speaking with tongues, and other violent forms of vocal expression, and in the violent laying-on of hands'.

Sundkler (1961:185) has described the receiving of the Spirit in a Zulu Zionist church thus:

Enoch himself and six or seven of the women begin to speak in tongues, all at the same time. Some beat the ground with their fists. One woman keeps rolling on the ground. Another woman who has not yet received the Spirit cries loudly 'Woza, Moya, woza' (Come, Spirit, come).

On another occasion he describes a baptismal ceremony when a Zionist preacher, when filled with the Spirit, began to manifest as follows: 'His whole body shakes, and he shouts, first slowly, but soon faster and faster: "Hhayi, hhayi, hhayi, hhe, hhe, hhe!"' (Sundkler 1961:239).

Another Zionist preacher described a dream, after which he was filled with the Spirit: 'A sharp wind blew. I felt that I was full (ngisuthile), I was full indeed. I almost burst, yes, I was ready to burst. I fell down. I threw myself in all directions. My whole body was shaking, not for fear, but because I was filled with Umoya' (Sundkler 1961:245). Later Sundkler (1976:101-104) describes a service he attended of the 'Church of the Spirit' in Durban. On this occasion in 1958 there were speaking in tongues and interpretations. In addition to this Sundkler describes various other manifestations, including a warming up with an oft repeated short hymn, flailing arms and feet, screaming, snorting, shaking and crying. Pauw (1960:198) says that in the Tswana 'Pentecostal separatist churches' the Holy Spirit reveals his presence through revelations (particularly in dreams) and 'by making (people) perform certain bodily movements and pronounce utterances which do not form part of everyday language (speak with tongues)'. He describes various other manifestations of the Spirit in these churches: some make a 'buzzing sound like that of a bee ... others make blow-
ing or hissing sounds, or snort ... jerks of the body, stooping postures, twitchings, shivering, waving of arms, and similar bodily movements ... also interpreted as the work of the Spirit' (1960:200).

West (1975:29n) notes that: ‘Spirit possession occurs most frequently among women, particularly during dancing, or during emotional services. The Holy Spirit is believed to enter the person, who is caused to stagger and palpitate and sometimes to cry out’. During healing sessions a Spirit-type church leader was observed whilst dancing to raise his hand to ‘catch’ the Holy Spirit and redirect it towards the congregation (1975:93). West mentions Spirit-possession as occurring often in the Soweto churches he surveyed. He does not describe the phenomenon further, but considers it to be a universal characteristic of an ‘ideal-type Zionist’ church (1975:36).

Cazziol (1987:109) says that speaking in tongues and dreams are the most common manifestations of the Spirit among Swazi Zionists. Armitage (1976:163), also writing about this phenomenon in Swaziland, notes that the leader of the Amajeriko, Elias Vilakazi, roars like a bull or a lion when possessed by the Spirit. His followers often follow this example during church services. This group, however, is considered a syncretistic sect by most other Swazi Zionist churches. On one occasion Armitage (1976:314) witnessed an ecumenical Zionist service where the Amajeriko present brought some confusion to the proceedings by their antics. She comments: ‘Roaring like a bull and blowing are means of inducing possession. They stimulate excitement and alter the pattern of breathing, which along with the very co-ordinated rhythm of the singing and dancing induce trance and possession’.

Cazziol (1987:148) gives an interesting account of Amajeriko manifestations during a service he attended which he describes as ‘pandemonium’ and an ‘amazing outburst of mass hysteria’. Through drums and rapid dancing he saw people work themselves up to a frenzy, some rolling about on the floor, two men charging each other and knocking each other down, and ‘yelling, bellowing, howling and speaking in tongues’. Amongst other Swazi Zionists signs of the Spirit’s possession include beating the chest and speaking in tongues (Armitage 1976:315), and pain across the shoulders (1976:340). Commenting on these various manifestations of the ‘Holy Spirit’, Armitage (1976:337) speaks of ‘corporate trance’ and ‘individual spirit possession which often has more violent indications’. She observes that this possession does not conform to a regular pattern (1976:338). Spirit manifestations researched by Nussbaum (1985:81-83) among Lesotho independents include wild dancing, speaking in tongues, falling down, cramps, and a sense of great heat or tension throughout the body.
Daneel (1971:319) describes the outpouring of the Spirit upon Johane Maranke and the African Apostolic Church founded by him in Zimbabwe. Maranke saw a bright light fall on him. Later it is recorded that he spoke in tongues. His maternal cousin Simon Mushati relates his own experience of receiving the Spirit as follows: ‘I then saw a movement as if something was moving very slowly .... My heart started boiling as hot water would boil. I fell to the ground because the Holy Spirit had taken hold of me, and I found myself shouting, Amen! Amen!’ (1971:322).

Stebbing (1985:104), also researching independent churches in Zimbabwe, posed a question to his respondents: ‘How, then, do we know that the Holy Spirit is present in a person?’ He observed that the question resulted in a great variety of answers, amongst which were the possession of ‘the powers’ (especially speaking in tongues), authentication through dreams, shaking one’s head and sneezing (1985:107).

1.3 Holy Spirit manifestation in Kimbanguism in Zaïre

Much of Oosthuizen’s evaluations are based on the previous research of Andersson and Sundkler, especially the former, the earliest researcher of Kimbanguism in what was then the Belgian Congo. Andersson (1958:6), writing about Simon Kimbangu, states that the prophet’s activities were

... nervous automatisms ... which included quakings, head-shaking, rolling of the eyes, jumping, muscular spasms and attacks of cramp. It is also probable that Kimbangu ... began to exhibit nervous tics caused by the stress and anxiety from which he was undoubtedly suffering.

MacGaffey (1983:106) mentions Kimbangu trembling and speaking in tongues when possessed by the Spirit. This too was the action of a prophet named Makunzu observed by MacGaffey (1983:161). As far as the ‘receiving of the Spirit’ by early converts of Kimbangu were concerned, Andersson (1958:58) notes that:

The symptoms of ecstasy and the shaking of the body were regarded as practical proof that they had ‘received the Spirit’ .... Kimbangu's symptoms were (quoting Palmaer) 'somewhat violent, and greatly resembling those of the heathen banganga. He tossed his head, rolled his eyes, and jumped into the air, while his body often twitched all over'.

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Andersson proceeds to give various reports of these somewhat extreme manifestations; and one is not always sure whether he is referring to Kimbanguism itself or to the more syncretistic movements that emerged out of it. More recent research into the Kimbanguist movement is silent on these excesses; although they do mention trembling and speaking in tongues (Martin 1975:54). MacGaffey (1983:68) says that in the ‘Church of the Holy Spirit’ in Zaïre daily manifestations of the Spirit in the form of trembling, visions and speaking in tongues gave ‘assurance of salvation’. Other manifestations included violent shrieking and trembling, and jumping continuously in the air.

Andersson (1958:109) speaks of the later Ngunza movement in the Congo: ‘For practically all the prophets and their supporters it was an axiom that the Spirit should express itself in external phenomena, in the ecstasy, and above all in the body-shaking’. In the syncretistic Khaki movement, evidence of the ‘Spirit’s possession’ is violent body-shaking (both standing still and after falling to the ground), wild jumping, climbing of tall palm trees, falling to the ground as if dead, and jumping into fire (1958:171-172). But these manifestations in Zaïre may not be taken as representative of the entire Spirit-type movement in Africa.

1.4 Holy Spirit manifestation in West African spiritual churches

In West Africa there are reports of manifestations similar to those already described. Baëta (1962:1) speaks of the signs of receiving the Holy Spirit, which characterise the Ghanaian ‘spiritual churches’, as

... rhythmic swaying of the body, usually with stamping, to repetitious music ... hand-clappings, ejaculations, poignant cries and prayers, dancing, leaping, and various other reactions expressive of intense religious emotion; prophesyings, ‘speaking with tongues’, falling into trances, relating dreams and visions, and ‘witnessing’.

This list would generally be true of the Pentecostal movement as a whole, to a greater or lesser degree. Mullings (1979:74) describes the receiving of the Spirit in the Ghanaian Church of the Messiah, which ‘may take a variety of forms, from mild convulsive movements of the upper half of the body to sporadic jerks, doubling the body from the waist’. Turner (1967b:127-128) says that it is mostly women who evidence possession by the Holy Spirit during the
services of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Nigeria, causing shivers, jerks, spasmodic bodily movements, and speaking in tongues. Ndiokwere (1981:83) quotes Nwosu describing a Nigerian spiritual church, where the Spirit descended on praying members:

The petitioner rattles words breathlessly, rubbing his hands feverishly and swaying his body to the rhythm of his words .... Here and there a member may squirm his body in ecstasy and utter an unintelligible word or two. Another may grunt, while a third may break into a fit of panting as if suddenly struck with epilepsy ....

Omoyajowo (1982:98) says that the Nigerian ‘Cherubim and Seraphim’ members believe that the evidence of their having received the Holy Spirit is their being able to perform miracles of healing, interpret dreams, prophesy and speak in tongues.

1.5 A tentative assessment

Sundkler and Hollenweger's previous descriptions of receiving the Spirit by Western Pentecostals are not unlike many of these African descriptions. I have read many accounts of receiving the Spirit in Pentecostal literature which are similar; and I have seen such phenomena on many occasions in Black Pentecostal churches. Some of these manifestations are in fact strikingly reminiscent of the experience of the nineteenth century American revivalist Charles G. Finney, described in his autobiography, and of the 1906 Azusa Street Pentecostal revival in Los Angeles.

My own experience of receiving the Spirit in 1968 was somewhat similar. I felt the overwhelming presence of God causing me to tremble; and it felt like surges of power repeatedly coming over my whole being. Later I began to speak in tongues for the first time in my life; and I have done so many times since. These subjective experiences are very difficult to describe; but it means that I cannot criticise Sundkler's descriptions of Zionists receiving the Spirit - although perhaps my own experience was less physical and more in keeping with Western decorum! It is a fact, however, that a fear of the 'excesses' that often accompanied the receiving of the Spirit in African churches caused many Western Pentecostal missionaries to suppress this central tenet of their faith in teaching and practice. It is necessary for the Holy Spirit to be allowed to work in a particularly African way.
History has a way of repeating itself. When Charles Parham, the first white Pentecostal leader, visited Azusa Street in 1906 (the birthplace of worldwide Pentecostalism), he rejected what he considered to be ‘unintelligent, crude negroisms’ and ‘animalisms’ that were being practised there: ‘whites were engaging in the same motor behaviour as blacks: shaking, jerking, dancing, falling down and speaking in tongues ‘under the power’ of the Holy Spirit’ (MacRobert 1988:60). We must remember that the Holy Spirit has a specifically ‘African’ way of revealing himself to Africans; and this has often been misunderstood by Western Pentecostal missionaries. They have branded what they see as ‘excesses’, demon manifestations, returning to traditional religion, or manifestations of the ‘flesh’. And these criticisms are also made by other Westerners who are not Pentecostals. We have seen that the ecstatic experiences described here are by no means confined to Africa, although they may differ in different cultural contexts.

2 SPEAKING IN TONGUES

2.1 The phenomenon described in the sixties

For churches which are of Western Pentecostal origin, speaking in tongues is usually regarded as the ‘initial evidence’ of receiving the Holy Spirit. In these churches the phenomenon is of central significance to faith and practice. It is also the phenomenon which largely distinguishes ‘charismatics’ from other Christians in the ‘historic’ Western churches. In African Spirit-type churches, however, there is evidence that speaking in tongues does not play such a prominent part. At least it does not feature very prominently in the available literature. The earliest works on African independent churches almost invariably adopted a negative approach to the phenomenon. In Sundkler’s works ‘speaking with tongues’ features as meaningless monosyllabic repetition, which he has reproduced (amazingly) from memory. In one service he witnessed the following:

... one of the women suddenly started convulsive movements of the body and gesticulated with her arms in an up-and-down movement. With half-closed eyes she spoke in tongues:

Dji-dji-dji-dji-dji-dji, Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah.
Amen ....
At a Zionist service one almost invariably experiences happenings of this kind.

(Sundkler 1961:248)

Sundkler says that Zionists would find it difficult to point to any Christian value in these phenomena; in fact he considers them to be ‘an old heathen pattern’ (1961:248). The outpouring of the Spirit which resulted in tongues did not begin with the coming of ‘Pentecost’ in 1908, but had its origins ‘long before the Zulu had ever heard the name of Christ’ (1961:249). This is a serious accusation indeed.

In Sundkler’s Zulu Zion the ‘speaking in tongues’ as reproduced by him (1976:102-103) has progressed to two and sometimes three oft-repeated syllables. He acknowledges that he did not use a tape recorder; and yet, once again he has remarkably managed to reproduce the ‘speaking in tongues’ and its ‘interpretation’ verbatim - and that seventeen years after he heard it. Apart from this, Sundkler as a non-participating outsider probably has adopted a too negative approach. This account certainly smacks of a tongue-in-cheek description. And so he says that the preliminary hymn singing ‘serves to help the actors to warm up, get into the performance’, and that the structure of the glossolalic sounds ‘appeared to the listener as repetitive babbling’ (1976:103). It seems that he has forgotten the principle he had himself enunciated in this publication to interpret the phenomena ‘from the point of view of those involved’ (1976:305). Even this account shows that those involved were taking the speaking in tongues seriously; Sundkler should have done the same.

Oosthuizen, mainly because of his great dependence on Sundkler’s ‘Bantu Prophets’, has the same attitude. He maintains that there is continuity between the meaningless syllables of the Zulu diviners and the speaking in tongues of the Zionists (1968:139). Like Sundkler, he contends that ‘Many African tribes had already various forms of speaking with tongues long before the introduction of Christianity’ (1968:140). He does, however, point out the Scriptural basis for speaking in tongues. Even if the doubtful assumption that ‘speaking in tongues’ is present in African traditional religions is granted, it does not therefore follow that what is encountered in Spirit-type churches is a ‘heathen’ pattern which must be rejected. We must take the phenomenon seriously as a genuine manifestation of the Holy Spirit; the Bible certainly does. The experiences that I have of speaking in tongues in my own life and in the lives of many other African Christians bear witness to the fact of this genuinely Christian phenomenon. As the saying goes, experience is not at the mercy of argument!
Pauw's earliest work (1960:200) also describes speaking in tongues in Tswana independent churches: 'When praying and preaching, whole phrases of apparently meaningless sounds are often interjected.' He too draws a parallel between speaking in tongues and practices in traditional religion. Andersson (1958:109) says that speaking in tongues in the Ngunza movement in Zaire is connected with 'shakings' and is 'considered to be a revelation from God'. Here the prophets usually follow up the tongues with an explanation of what they believe God has revealed. Baëta (1962:33, 36) says that the founding prophets of the Musama Disco Chrístico Church in Ghana spoke in tongues as evidence that the Holy Spirit had come on them. This was also practised in a charismatic group within the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The founder of this group gave an explanation with which most modern Charismatic tongues speakers would agree: 'I do not myself understand what I say. I simply follow an impelling urge to utter these words, and I feel sure that the Spirit works through them, since they come from him' (1962:99). We will later see that this was also the understanding of the apostle Paul regarding the issue of tongues.

2.2 Later research

In the late sixties Turner was the first to adopt a more sympathetic approach. Interestingly, the change in attitude coincided with a more positive evaluation of glossolalia following what was referred to as the 'Charismatic Renewal' in the Western world. By this time scholars could no longer brush aside the African independent and Pentecostal churches as small fanatical fringe groups; for statistics showed them to be the fastest growing movements in Christianity. Turner (1967b:111, 118) finds speaking in tongues practised in the worship of the Nigerian Aladura churches, accompanied by interpretation. These manifestations of the Spirit provide for the personal and corporate participation of the worshippers (1967b:120). The Aladura leader Oduwole sees speaking in tongues as one of the five signs of Mark 16:17-18 that indicate a 'true church' (1967b:317). Turner (1967b:129) refutes the idea that these signs of Spirit possession have their origin in traditional religions; and he makes the extremely significant point that the Aladura movement 'acquired these experiences through the influence of Western pentecostalism ... although we recognise that the indigenous tradition may have facilitated the Western influence'. This is an observation that must not be overlooked. When we consider the historical origins of the Spirit-type churches in Southern Africa, we must come to the same conclusion.
Nussbaum's (1985:81) survey among five independent churches in Lesotho observed that only 32.5% of the sample of members spoke in tongues, 'notable for its very low frequency'. Where (as in one church) speaking in tongues was experienced in church services more frequently, it was because 'a very small number of people in the congregation speak in tongues almost every week' (1985:82-83). Cazziol (1987:132) mentions speaking in tongues as a normal part of Swazi Zionist churches. Neither he nor Nussbaum attempts to describe the phenomenon itself.

Daneel (1974:187) says that speaking in tongues in Shona Spirit-type churches indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person, especially during prophetic healing sessions (1974:214-215). He has transcribed several such occasions of tongues, usually followed by a prophetic diagnosis and therapy, which were themselves often interrupted by the speaking in tongues (1974:217). Many of these transcriptions are mixtures of fairly nonsensical English words mixed with unknown tongues. The dialogue has many gaps indicated, which may mean that more unknown language was spoken than the transcription demonstrates. Daneel (1974:223) attempts to analyse the speaking in tongues. He observes 'discernable patterns' in the different church groups, each making use of different sets of sounds and words. He concludes that the purpose of the glossolalic utterances to the speakers (and this is what is important, after all!) is that 'God's presence and His authority are established at the outset' in these prophetic healing sessions. Glossolalia is also used by prophets when detecting cases of witchcraft, and when removing evil medicine - once again to manifest the presence of the Holy Spirit (1974:265, 269-270). A service held for such purposes concluded with 'prayer, singing and a tumult of speaking with tongues' (1974:273). Prophets also speak in tongues while they form a 'gate' to the sacred enclosure where church services are held (1974:297, 303).

Daneel (1974:349) makes it clear that tongues, although practised widely in the prophetic churches, is by no means the invariable and only manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit. When it does occur in prophetic sessions it 'contains an element of expectation and of trust that the Holy Spirit will guide the proceedings; it is not merely an act of mechanically introducing the Spirit as an impersonal entity'. This is a significant observation; for however much 'nonsense' the speaking in tongues may appear to an outside observer, it is used for the express purpose of revealing the dependence of the speaker upon God. After speaking in tongues on these occasions the prophet usually 'relates in understandable language what he considers the Holy Spirit to be revealing to him' (1974:352).
Wyllie (1980:44) describes and transcribes the speaking in tongues of the leader of the Ghanaian ‘Christ Divine Healing Church’ on one occasion as ‘sounding very much like simulated Latin’ and later resembling ‘more closely a simulated Arabic’. In fact, Wyllie’s transcription of these tongues bears very little resemblance to Latin and Arabic, and actually lacks the repetitiveness characteristic of some of the groups previously mentioned. Ndiokwere (1981:89) quotes a Nigerian prophet who explained the significance of visible manifestations of the Holy Spirit, including speaking in tongues. These were ‘the hallmark of the experience of the Spirit, a period of personal contact with the divine’. Ndiokwere (1981:93) does not attempt to connect the speaking in tongues in African churches with traditional religions, but with the Western charismatic and Pentecostal movements. These manifestations ‘are the unmistakable characteristic of the neo-pentecostal movements in the modern church’. He points out that glossolalia is a recurring occurrence in ‘Christian revival movements’ throughout church history (1981:164). Omoyajowo (1982:137) says that speaking in tongues is not widely practised in the Cherubim and Seraphim Society of Nigeria; and in some churches it is expressly forbidden. Yet speaking in tongues accompanied by interpretation does occur in some of these churches during worship. Once again, the practice is evidence of possession by the Holy Spirit, and ‘has its warrant in Scripture’. The tongues are mostly ‘incoherent and unintelligible’ and are explained to the church by an interpreter (1982:138). Omoyajowo (1982:139) has no doubts about the authentic nature of the experience: ‘It would be an entirely subjective opinion to categorically deny the genuineness of the phenomenon of tongues’.

What we have here, therefore, in most cases represents a genuine manifestation of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit - certainly it is this to the participators. Speaking in tongues in African churches must not be seen as a continuation of traditional religious practices, but as an indication of the present Holy Spirit. This has its origins in American Pentecostalism and in fact parallels the experiences of both Western Pentecostalism and the tongues manifestations in the New Testament. To aver otherwise is to make a subjective and unwarranted misinterpretation of the phenomenon. We will see in the final chapter that speaking in tongues is a biblical phenomenon that often contributes to the reality of a person’s encounter with God the Holy Spirit. At best, we may consider the African traditional spirit world to be the fertile ground that prepared the way for the ‘coming of the Holy Spirit’ to Africa, as we shall see in the fifth chapter.
3 PROPHETIC REVELATIONS

3.1 The nature of prophecy in African churches

Amongst Western ‘mainline’ Pentecostals prophecy tends to be restricted to ‘forthtelling’ rather than ‘foretelling’, to exhortation rather than prediction, despite some notable exceptions. In the older Pentecostal churches, prophecy which is personal or predictive is often avoided, so that Hollenweger (1972:345) speaks of the absence of what he terms ‘biblical prophecy’ there. Not so in African Spirit-type churches, where prophecy of a personal and predictive nature frequently appears. This is particularly the case where prophetic activity has much to do with helping people overcome their traditional and deep-seated fear of witchcraft and sorcery. Sundkler (1961:264) maintains that both Zionist prophesying and their healing practices are founded upon the belief in witchcraft. Turner (1967b:138), however, disagrees: ‘the prophet in the independent churches is an African reaction to the advent of Christianity that is cast in a biblical rather than a pagan mould’. If we could strip Sundkler’s view from its negative connotations, we could say that the spirit world of African traditional thought constructs in its own cosmology the built-in fears and threats that demand a Christian response. This the African Christian prophet attempts to do, particularly in the healing sessions. Daneel (1974:214) says that ‘many a prophecy is made on behalf of the sick’. Diagnostic prophetic activity is probably the most common type of prophecy in African Spirit-type churches. Stebbing (1985:108) and earlier Andersson (1958:110) say that another one of the main prophetic functions in the churches they observed was ‘to discern who has sinned and to get them to repent’. In the light of what follows, however, this appears to be a somewhat superficial observation.

In the Nigerian Aladura movement prophesying is also a prominent feature. Turner (1967b:129) shows that prophecy there, like in other Spirit-type churches in Africa, is to ‘pass on to others revelations or messages based upon what has been seen or heard through the special work of the Spirit’. Prophesies are often private and personal; but personal prophesies are also given to individuals and to everyone in general during regular church services. Much of this prophesying serves a distinct pastoral function of providing advice or exhortation.

3.2 The prophetic office

Daneel (1988:25) distinguishes between the Reformed understanding of the prophetic office as ‘the Word of God being preached’, and ‘the Old Testament
sense of revelations and divine communications being transmitted to the wider body of believers by individuals with special prophetic gifts'. Both of these understandings exist in the Shona Spirit-type churches. My own Pentecostal perspective differs from this distinction, as I shall attempt to demonstrate in the final chapter. The understanding of the prophetic office termed the 'Old Testament sense' as defined here by Daneel is in fact probably also present in the New Testament writings (see for example Acts 11:27-28; 13:1-2; 21:10-11; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 14:29-32). There is not therefore a fine distinction between prophesying in the Old Testament and in the New Testament; and therefore the use of 'Old Testament sense' here is not, in my view, strictly accurate.

In African Spirit-type churches prophesying is an essential aspect of the ministry. As Daneel (1988:25) puts it, 'It is the accepted way in which the Holy Spirit reveals His will for a specific situation'. In this sense it forms part of pastoral care; for the many different problematic situations encountered by African people are brought to the prophet for his assistance. He makes known the will of God for a particular situation; and thus through the Holy Spirit he helps bring relief. In these churches 'it is taken for granted that this form of communication between God and man belongs to the essence of Christianity' (1988:27).

3.3 Diagnostic prophecy

Joseph Dlamini, a Swazi prophet, told Armitage (1976:344) that the Holy Spirit 'reveals to me the things and diseases that will befall other people. The Spirit also tells me the remedy and how to overcome such things'. Daneel (1974:216) says that a newly installed prophet will often diagnose not only the present sources of peoples' problems but also predict future spiritual attacks. Yet prophesying usually means 'revealing God's will for a particular situation of pressing need, rather than predicting the distant future' (Daneel 1988:26). Stebbing (1985:108) goes even further to say that 'Prophecy among the Chipinge Independents was never about future events'. Armitage (1976:347) points out that this traditionally oriented revelation by the Holy Spirit

... frequently deals with acute social and family misery caused by fundamental beliefs in witches and sorcery ... the profoundest gloom and social depression is relieved .... Besides providing a normative structure for people's lives they also provide an outlet from the oppression of the old systems
of belief. The Zionist priest and prophets are regarded as saviours, representatives of Christ, who lead people out from the debilitating entanglements and suspicions which destroy social relationships.

Daneel (1974:217-232) gives several examples of Zionist diagnostic prophesies in Zimbabwean churches. These usually consist of revealing the cause of illness or abnormality as well as the remedy. The cause was often shown to be a domestic relationship problem or a social conflict. In one case the cause was a co-wife, in another the parents-in-law, and in yet another the parents in contact with a deceased woman. Sometimes the patient is troubled by family spirits, or even by her own misconduct. There are sometimes dire consequences for the one who does not follow the prophet’s instructions. This also often leads to a strengthening of the patient’s ties with the church organisation represented by the prophet, an effective recruitment technique (1974:230).

3.4 Parallels with traditional divination

Daneel (1974:224) points out the similarities that exist between prophetic diagnoses and traditional divination, because of which ‘the diagnostic prophecies have such an appeal for the afflicted Shona’. The parallels in the liturgy can be seen in the preliminaries, whereby in the warming-up atmosphere of singing, clapping, dancing and stamping a state of trance is sometimes induced. Because the prophecy is seen in terms of an African’s own traditional orientation it is very meaningful. Daneel (1974:224-225) points out that the difference between the traditional divination and the prophetic diagnosis lies in the ‘medium through which the extraordinary knowledge is obtained’. The diviner relies on divinatory slabs, bones or spirits, or some other means, whereas the prophet invokes and speaks on behalf of the Holy Spirit exclusively. The important point is that both types of ‘divination’ concentrate on ‘the personal causation of illness’, which is the question foremost in an African’s mind. The prophet seeks to witness to the power of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit, thus providing a remedy more effective than traditional rites.

To say that the Zionist prophets have simply taken over the function of the traditional diviner is to miss the point. Daneel (1974:294) convincingly shows that the prophetic diagnoses and prescriptions point to confrontation and change rather than to a preserving of the old order. ‘While the nganga seeks a solution which accedes to the conditions of the spirits, the prophetic therapy is based upon a belief in the power of the Christian God, which surpasses all other powers.’ All the Shona prophets ‘ultimately emphasize their dependence
on the Holy Spirit as the real revelatory agent' (1974:232). Because of this fundamental difference, any similarities of method between the prophets and the diviners remain superficial.

Turner (1967b:132) also considers the parallel between traditional divination and the activities of the prophets in the Aladura churches. Whilst the questions remain the same: 'The Church of the Lord cannot ... be condemned because its members seek to divine the will of God, especially when it rejects all manipulative divination and confines itself to oracular methods, to 'spiritual enquiry' only'.

3.5 Detection of wizardry

Daneel (1974:261) underscores the importance of the preoccupation that the Spirit-type churches have with wizardry as the cause of sickness and death. This is a major factor for the attraction that these churches hold. Daneel (1974:266-276) illustrates with the cases of Jaka, a prophet in the Apostolic Church of Maranke, and the prophet Elison Mutingwende. The latter is a charismatic personality whose medicine-finding techniques provided the main attraction in the founding of a new church. Daneel (1974:278-292) also cites the case histories of prophets whose activities included detecting wizards, either directly or indirectly. But as he points out, 'only a handful of prophets ... have become widely known as real wizard-hunters' (1974:278), roving prophets under constant threat of prosecution.

Daneel has given us the most penetrating insight into prophecy in African independent churches to date. The Southern Shona prophets wield a great deal of influence and control. 'As a means of probing for and exposing evil and destructive forces', he writes (1988:26) 'the prophetic task becomes a powerful control factor in the Spirit-type church'. I venture to say that this would also be true of other Spirit-type churches, particularly in Southern Africa where similar conditions exist.

There are three stages of this prophetic control within the Shona churches:

(a) the initial check on all newcomers before they are baptised;
(b) the regular exposure of wizards during church services; and
(c) the all-important 'gate-test' preceding the use of the sacraments during the annual Paseka (Passover) festivities (Daneel 1974:293).
The pre-baptismal prophesies are aimed at ensuring complete confession of sins and the submission of the candidate to prophetic authority. If this is not achieved baptism is withheld (Daneel 1974:294). The supernatural authority that the prophets have through the Holy Spirit is perpetuated by the prophetic ministry at weekly church services, when church members are encouraged to confess their sins regularly. This also protects against what Daneel (1974:299) calls ‘in-group wizardry’ within the church. The prophetic gate-test before the Communion service at the annual festival is directed at ‘hidden sins’, especially witchcraft, adultery and theft. Those that fail the test are turned away from Communion, but are not barred from membership in the church (1974:301). Even the founding leader of the church can be bewitched. Women who are accused of witchcraft are in an invidious position. They must confess in order to pass the gate-test, whether they are guilty or not; if they do not they may face the loss of property and even death at the hands of their villagers (1974:304). Because of these consequences, many Spirit-type churches have shunned any semblance of ‘witch-finding’ in their practices; the Aladura churches in Nigeria, for example, will prophesy about ‘enemies’ but will never implicate ‘witches’ by name (Turner 1967b:132). Daneel (1974:307-308) says that:

These practices demonstrate the continual concern of prophets with wizardry, the fact that they take the deep-seated wizardry beliefs in African society seriously and confront the evil forces with the power of the Holy Spirit .... Through these indigenous practices, incorporated and transformed in church life, the Christian witness acquires a meaningful dimension, which appeals especially to the afflicted members of an African society.

3.6 Meeting a need

Thus, the power of the Holy Spirit in Africa must not only be seen to overcome the results of evil; it must also answer Africa’s question ‘Why?’, revealing and removing the cause of evil. In Spirit-type churches, sometimes the revelation of the cause is by itself sufficient to guarantee the alleviation of the problem, and the supplicant is satisfied. These revelations by the Holy Spirit as practised in these churches become one of the major causes of attraction for outsiders seeking answers to their particularly African problems. Appiah-Kubi (1979:120) says that ‘the supernatural powers of the prophets and the healing miracles that counteract the forces of evil, disease, and witchcraft - are sought by those unhappy and dissatisfied with the strictly western nature of most of
the mission churches'. And Turner (1967b:137) says that 'the main appeal of what we have called a revelatory aladura church lies in its pentecostal revelations ...'. Prophetic revelations in Spirit-type churches must be taken seriously by anyone seeking to do meaningful theology in Africa.

I have only been able to cover some of the pneumatological manifestations in the Spirit-type churches. The selection of the particular phenomena of receiving the Spirit, speaking in tongues and prophecy has been made because these are the phenomena with which I am most familiar. There are many others, such as visions and dreams, various healing techniques, and exorcisms - on which much more research needs to be done. It is not possible in a study of this nature to attempt to comprehensively encompass all these phenomena. The manifestations that have been described give a tentative indication of the enormous contribution that Spirit-type churches make towards a contextual pneumatology in Africa. These gifts of the Holy Spirit make it possible for a person to have a dynamic and real relationship with God. They provide for the universal need for solutions to life's felt problems. They make Christianity relevant to and practical in all of life, in a way that formal theology cannot do. The presence of the Holy Spirit is demonstrated in a way that rings true in Africa's holistic world.
CHAPTER FOUR

The Holy Spirit and African power concepts

1 THE SPIRIT AND POWER

1.1 The Spirit as 'life-force'

A major area of criticism concerning African pneumatology as perceived by the Spirit-type churches concerns their concept of the 'power' of the Holy Spirit. Placide Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy* gives profound insight into the African concept of power, which he calls 'vital force' or 'life-force'. As we shall see, his Western philosophical approach has been seriously questioned and is no longer generally accepted. But I think that much of what he has to say about concepts of power is extremely valuable. According to Tempels (1959:44-45) all African behaviour is centred in this single value: 'their purpose is to acquire life, strength or vital force, to live strongly, that they are to make life stronger, or to assure that force shall remain perpetually in one's posterity' (italics in original). This force or 'power' is tangibly perceived and manipulable; and some may have more of it than others. It is from this backdrop that Beyerhaus (1969:74) made the comment that the *Moya* (Spirit) concept of the 'nativistic movements' is their 'religiously distinguishing factor' and is 'a mysterious force which is sought and mediated in the cultic gatherings'. This, he said, is tantamount to 'depersonalising God and changing his Spirit of lordship into an impersonal "it" power which becomes accessible to man' (1969:75). In similar vein Oosthuizen (1968:133) referred to Andersson's description of the Ngunza-khaki movement in lower Zaire and commented,
One of the main tasks of the prophets in this movement is to 'give' the Spirit to its members. Just as in animism, the spirit is invoked by those entrusted with this task; the spirit is 'given', by man's initiative and not by God's. The central doctrine of the Holy Spirit is obscured and distorted here beyond recognition ... 'the Spirit' is at man's disposal.

Martin (1964:161) spoke of a 'false pneumatology' in what she called 'African messianism' where a person

... attempts to get hold of the Holy Spirit, that source of power which promises the realisation of his dreams and hopes ... the prophets and messiahs 'possess' the 'Spirit' like an impersonal power, they get hold of it in their own way, and the 'Spirit' must give utterance in a visible and audible way (glossolaly, trembling, leaps), and not in the hidden manner of the new life in Christ which is the fruit of the Spirit.

Martin seemed to have placed the visibility and audibility of these manifestations of the Spirit over against the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is not, however, an either-or situation, and we must not be guilty of throwing out the proverbial baby with the bath water. In fact, illustrations from researchers will indicate that the Spirit-type churches do not see the Holy Spirit as an impersonal and manipulable force at all. Furthermore, the Bible itself furnishes abundant evidence of tangible manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power. To this we will return in the final chapter. At this stage perhaps it will suffice to say that the negative evaluations again stem from an overemphasis on theological theory (as Westerners see it), and a disparaging of the real-life situation as the African experiences it in the world of the Spirit. Beyerhaus (1969:76) even went as far as to equate Western culture with Christianity and to contrast this with African culture. Speaking of the 'cultural clash' he said that 'in all the groups we find the two elements: the traditional African and the new Christian or European ideas'. This audacious ethnocentrism became even more glaring as Beyerhaus concluded that 'the neo-pagan, nativistic movements sociologically are the result of the clash between the old heathen society with the Western society and its cultural pattern'. What Beyerhaus failed to see is that we are dealing with three elements and not two: the traditional African, the Western and the Christian - and that often the Christian element is closer to the African idea than it is to the Western one. I also suspect that several other
researchers, although not as blatantly as Beyerhaus, have nonetheless been guilty of the same ethnocentrism in their theological evaluations of Spirit-type churches. Fortunately, some of these researchers (notably Martin) have shifted their negative evaluations significantly as they have had closer contact with the people they have criticised, and thus have become more ‘African’ in their orientation.

The Western approach to the African world view has categorised ‘life-force’ as an impersonal manipulable force. The African, on the other hand, objects to such a dualistic categorisation that labels ‘impersonal’ something which is often, and at the same time, ‘personal’. Perhaps the ‘power’ made available to Christian believers through the Holy Spirit is closer to the African concept of ‘life-force’ than we dare to admit!

1.2 The specialist diviners

Whenever problems come to traditional African society, or even when there is a foreboding of trouble, it will usually be necessary for the afflicted to consult the specialists, the traditional diviners or ‘witchdoctors’, for the answers. The diviners are specialists in both the spirit world and in what we previously called dynamism. They have the special power to discern the wishes of the ancestors and to act as the protectors of society. Very often there is also the unseen evil force of the wizard, which needs to be counteracted with a more powerful force. Here I am using the term ‘wizard’ as it is commonly used in anthropology to denote both sorcerers (usually male) who use ‘medicine’ against their victims, and witches (female) who use medicines and/or some psychic act. The wizard can only succeed with the evil intent if some kind of access to the victim is gained through the latter’s protective ancestors. For this reason the African turns to the diviner, who is able to diagnose the cause of the affliction. The diviner in turn will usually prescribe some ancestral ritual, and sometimes give protective medicines and strong charms to overcome this unseen evil force.

Tragically, in much of imported Western Christianity there has been offered no alternative solution to the very real fears and problems encountered by Africans. It is my conviction that an African teaching and practice concerning the Holy Spirit, that is both biblical and contextualised in African life, provides a dynamic Christianity that meets Africa’s needs in this realm.
13 ‘Bantu philosophy’

Placide Tempels’ (1959:95-113) well-known exposition of what he terms ‘the theory of MUNTU or Bantu philosophy’ warrants brief discussion in this context. Tempels (1959:97) sees three main concepts or what he terms ‘great notions’ as the foundation of Bantu psychology. He makes the extremely significant point that the same ‘vital force’ which permeates the universe is that which is humanity: ‘The Bantu sees in man the living force; the force or the being that possesses life that is true, full and lofty’. Tempels describes this force in a person, muntu, as a ‘personal force’ (1959:97). The significance of this will be apparent soon, while we remember that the adjective ‘personal’ is not necessarily in contradistinction to ‘impersonal’! What we will discover, however, is that ‘life-force’ in African traditional thought is not as ‘impersonal’ as it is sometimes made out to be.

This concept of a person as a ‘living force’ is the first of Tempels’ main concepts in ‘Bantu Philosophy’. The second is that a person is able to increase or to decrease the vital force. Thirdly, a person as vital force is able to exert influence on other forces and be influenced by them. An individual does not exist apart from other things, whether human, animal or inanimate objects. This is in contrast to Western thinking. The interrelatedness of vital forces is the central theme of Bantu philosophy, according to Tempels (1959:103).

Tempels’ theory has not gone unchallenged. Mbiti (1969:10) comments that Tempels’ theory of vital force ‘cannot be applied to other African peoples with whose life and ideas I am familiar’. On the other hand, he does lend some credence to Tempels’ ideas by saying that ‘nothing is essentially dead or devoid of life (being) in the sight of African peoples’ (1969:92). Furthermore, he speaks of ‘mystical power’ by which everyone is directly or indirectly affected (1969:198).

Idowu (1973:155-156) also takes issue with Tempels’ theory in his attempt to prove that God is seen as the ultimate source of power in traditional religions. In his view Tempels has ‘got himself entrapped somewhere between an abstract philosophical world view and the Bantu world view ... It is one thing to say that God is the source of all power and another to equate his attribute with him’. McVeigh (1974:140-141) points out that ‘The oneness of nature, man and God in the African view is a oneness based on relationship, not identity’. In fairness to Tempels, it certainly seems as if his main intention was to translate African thought into Western categories so that it might be more intelligible to a Western audience. In doing so, he may well have fallen into the trap of which Idowu speaks. Idowu does not himself really address the
issue of African psychology elsewhere. McVeigh (1974:140) makes the suggestion that: ‘Since in fact the web of interaction which encompasses reality is composed of "living forces", Tempels might better have used the term ‘being’ than ‘vital force’ to translate the idea into Western thought.’ This would appear to be a more satisfactory term; for ‘being’ gives more weight to the idea of the personal nature of ‘power’ than does ‘life-force’. Tempels (1959:50) does in fact make it clear that the two concepts are the same. Nevertheless, ‘being’ does not express the idea of strength, force and power which is evidently inextricably tied up with the concept. Perhaps we should stay with ‘power’ as an acceptable term!

2 THE CONCEPT OF POWER

2.1 The constant drive for power

It is important for Christian theology to attempt to understand more clearly the African concept of power. Boesak (1977:41) says that ‘power is a relational reality ... it has to do with concrete relations in our socio-historical world’. Roberts (1974:96), referring to the writings of Nathan Wright, shows the importance of the concept of power in Black Theology. Wright said that ‘all men need the power to become. Without power, life cannot become what it must be ... he concludes that power is basic to life’. This, Roberts contends has ‘important implications for a doctrine of God’.

The idea of ‘Black power’, and the Black Consciousness movement as formulated by Biko and others had its origins in theological reflection on what it really means to a Black person to be created in the image of God. This was in fact the first question that was asked in South African Black Theology. People who were psychologically weak through generations of oppression found in the Black power concept a restoration of human dignity and self-esteem. Attitudes were radically changed as a result. Familiar to South Africans today is the raised fist with the cry ‘Amandla ngawethu!’ (Power is ours). I have come across the mistaken notion held by some White Evangelical Christians of my acquaintance that the clenched fist (pointed to ‘heaven’) demonstrates defiance of God’s authority. This myth which arises out of White fears of ‘Black power’ must be dispelled. Rather, the clenched fist must be seen as expressive of ‘the determination of Black people to affirm themselves as human beings in the face of White domination, and to mobilise their collective power in order to overcome it’ (Kritzinger 1988:44). It is ‘a salute to Black dignity and humanity, not a threatening fist pointed at someone else’ (1988:44). Note that power is here seen as collective human power, which is consistent with the traditional African concept.
We see therefore, that the yearning of the liberationists is not too far removed from that of the traditionalists, whose constant desire is for more power. 'Amandla', says Berglund (1976:247) also means 'forcefulness, strength ... ability'. This is the dynamistic aspect of African traditional religions, which may be compared with the *dunamis* promised to those upon whom the Holy Spirit comes (Acts 1:8), as well as with the 'Black power' of the liberationists. Christian pneumatology must affirm that the power of the Holy Spirit has more than just 'spiritual' significance. It also has to do with dignity, authority, and power over all types of oppression. A person who is oppressed, who must daily face injustices and affronts to his personal dignity, is a person who lacks power. In the holistic African world view we may not adopt a Western dualistic idea that the power of the Spirit only has to do with some sort of mystical, inner power which does not meet our concrete physical, social, political and economic needs. God loves and desires the welfare of the whole person; and so he sends his Spirit to bestow that divine, liberating ability and strength which enables a person to continue.

A person confronted by the surrounding universe, with its often threatening phenomena and forces, longs to be in control of what so often seems an uncontrollable situation. When faced with sickness, death, poverty, misfortune, sorcery, oppression, injustice, witchcraft, evil spirits, famine, floods, and so on *ad infinitum*, there is a longing for something outside oneself that will enable one to cope, for one cannot manage alone. This universal human need manifests itself in the desire for ability, enabling power - call it what you will; for it is found throughout the world and in every expression of humanity, religious, political or otherwise.

How does the traditional African handle these perplexing problems? By organising one's cosmos into explainable phenomena, one is able to make sense out of what would otherwise bewilder. One has to reckon continually with the reality that in this world there are no chance occasions or accidents; there is reason behind every eventuality. The universe and all it contains is permeated with 'power', which may be appropriated by a person in varying degrees, and may be applied with good or evil consequences.

2.2 ‘Being’ and ‘power’

We have seen that Tempels (1959:44) has said that the supreme value of traditional African peoples is 'life, force, to live strongly, or vital force'. He states that 'the concept 'force' is inseparable from the definition of 'being' .... Without the element 'force', 'being' cannot be conceived .... Force is the
nature of being, force is being, being is force' (1959:50-51). This 'vital force' or 'being' can also be referred to as 'power' - the term I prefer to use for the purposes of this study. The reasons for this will become clear later. At the same time, we must remember that it is fruitless to engage in speculation as to whether this power is 'impersonal' or 'personal'; we have already made the point that such categorising is alien to the African world view. To the African, one's life, one's very existence - in other words one's being - is inextricably tied up with one's power. To live is to have power; to be sick or to die is to have less of it. Taylor (1963:72) puts it, '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'.

At this stage it is necessary to caution against generalising, when speaking of 'African' concepts of power. These concepts depend very much upon the level of cultural and technological development of Africans, and whether they are in a rural or an urban environment. In these different contexts, although power is sought earnestly, it acquires different meanings. Among many South African urban blacks, for example, the 'supreme value' that is sought above all is political and economic power. Nevertheless, the concept of power as expounded here is still appropriate.

It is also to be remembered that the African traditional world is anthropocentric; it is a 'personalised universe' (Taylor 1963:79). Tempels (1959:53) warns against assuming that Africans conceive of the universe as if it were animated by some universal force, a sort of unique magical power encompassing all existence'. To the contrary, he says, Africans clearly distinguish between different forces and recognise the individuality of forces. It is incorrect therefore to speak as Beyerhaus (1969:74-75) does about 'a mysterious force', or to speak of 'an impersonal "it" power' (Martin 1964:161) in African thought, whether ancient or modern! Even 'inferior forces ... (animal, plant or mineral) exist only ... to increase the vital force of men while they are on earth' (Tempels 1959:65). A person has the potential to be the most powerful earthly being; this power or being is 'life that is true, full and lofty' (1959:97). That power can increase and diminish, and can be lost completely, resulting in 'the complete annihilation of his very essence' (1959:100). That power is in an inextricable relationship with every other greater and lesser power, in what Tempels (1959:103) terms 'the hierarchy of forces'. It is therefore able to influence and be influenced by other powers. It does not exist in isolation in the Western philosophical sense of 'being in itself'; it only exists because of its interaction with other powers.
All these powers, Tempels (1959:99) observes, find their source in God. He is 'the causative agent, the sustainer of these resultant forces, as being the creation cause'. God is thus seen as the ultimate source of power by traditional Africa. Berglund (1976:36) found this true among the Zulu. This point is very significant when it comes to the understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit in African Christianity. Even the traditionalist knows that all power comes ultimately from God. Idowu (1973:156) takes this thought a step further when he says 'in African thought ... all other beings exist in consequence of him (God); and that whatever power or authority there may be exists in consequence of him; because it derives from him and because he permits it'.

Mbiti (1969:32) sees God in African thought at the top of a hierarchy of power, beneath which are the spirits, natural phenomena and lastly people 'who have comparatively little or no power at all'. In the light of all that has already been said in this section, however, this categorising is not really true to African thought, and seems in any case to be an oversimplification. Nevertheless, the point is that all power has its source in God.

2.3 The manipulation of power

It is to the use and 'manipulation' of this power that we must now turn. Taylor (1963:78) says that the uniqueness of the living power that is a person 'lies in its possession of creative intelligence and will which can directly strengthen or weaken another human in his life-force; can influence the force of non-human things; can control the force of a thing to influence the life-force of another person'. This is the principle behind the use in Africa of magic and herbal medicines.

Daneel (1971:140) defines magic as 'the achievement of a desired end through the correct, expressive and symbolic manipulation of power-laden objects and of spiritual forces; with or without the aid of spiritual beings'. Idowu (1973:189-190) describes it as when a person conceives of the power which is 'wholly other' than oneself as 'the reservoir of elemental forces ... he has sought to tap and harness ... it operates on the belief that supernatural power can be controlled by mechanical techniques devised or discovered by man'. Mbiti (1969:194) speaks of 'African views, fears, uses and manipulation' of 'mystical power'. This term is a misleading one, for it suggests something that is indefinable, vague and mysterious. Nevertheless he does depict correctly the pervasiveness of this power in traditional life: 'the whole psychic atmosphere of African village life is filled with belief in this mystical power' (1969:197). He continues to say that this power resides in words, causes people to do super-
natural things, and may be used or applied. In order to obtain this power, Africans make use of charms, medicines, and consult diviners. 'Everyone is directly or indirectly affected, for better or for worse, by beliefs and activities connected with this power, particularly in its manifestation as magic, sorcery, and witchcraft' (1969:198). Diviners use this power for the overall good of the community, particularly in providing protection against the illegitimate use of power, the work of evil sorcerers or witches. Mbiti (1969:200) defines sorcery as the 'anti-social employment of mystical power'.

The supreme being, then, is seen traditionally as the source of all power. This power, however, has no dualism; for God can both use his power for good or withhold it, resulting in evil. Berglund (1976:248) notes that God is described 'as partly erratic and unreliable, partly as exercising both justified and unjustified anger'. The power resident in material substances may be described as 'neutral'; and these substances are collectively known in Zulu as imithi ('medicines') (1976:256). The interrelatedness of this neutral power with the power resident in a person is clear; for it 'can be used to encourage and support the powers embodied in men' (1976:257). Medicines can therefore be legitimately used for a wide variety of beneficial purposes: such as fertility, success, courtship, protection, and even the changing of personality (1976:346). On the other hand, they are also used illegitimately to harm people, or to reduce their power. Berglund (1976:248) makes a distinction in Zulu thought-patterns between the neutral power residing in imithi and that which is found in the lineage and in God.

God's power is expressed in his anger, also called his 'heat' (ukushisa). The power inherent in the lineage, and in every individual of it, is expressed in fertility, also known as ukushisa (heat). The power of fertility is also called 'work' or 'desire' (ukufisa) (Berglund 1976:253). The power in the lineage is also closely connected with that of the ancestors: 'the force of fertility, identified with the shades, is their immediate concern with survivors' (1976:254). The power of fertility, however, must be seen as distinct from the ancestors themselves. Although Berglund describes the power in material substances as 'neutral', contrary to the power in the lineage; and although he avoids such terms as 'personal' or 'impersonal', he does not give an alternative adjective to 'neutral' by which the power in humans may be described. Perhaps an appropriate term would be 'angry power' or 'hot power'. Sotho peoples also have a concept of 'heat' analogous to that of the Nguni, of which the Zulu are a part. Nevertheless, there is a personal quality about the power residing in people, intimately linked as it is to the ancestors and the ongoing life of the
community. Mönnig (1967:52) makes the same distinction: 'The power which is situated in natural objects has a certain quality that differs from that pertaining to man ... it is not changeable, nor is it individualistic.' The power in humans is, by implication, changeable and individualistic.

In all these instances we see clearly the interrelatedness between magic, power and the ancestors. The diviner's capacity to 'make magic' is ascribed to the power of the ancestors residing within. Once again, it is the profound holism which is characteristic of all things African. In this discussion of power in African traditional thought I have tried to steer clear of Western categorising. And yet it is clear that power is individualised, and not some sort of cosmic force that permeates all things everywhere, including man and the supreme being. That is why it is important to divorce such terms as magic, witchcraft and even 'power' from Western connotations, which may easily obscure our understanding of African thought. Power is tied up with African life or being in its essence; the cry for power is not a cry which is selfish or arrogant, but is a necessary one. The African as a powerful force must himself interact with other powers and have power in order to exist.

3 THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

3.1 The power-play of life

African theism posits a supreme being who is at times good and at times seemingly in league with evil, a God who is both far and near, to be feared because of his power and in many instances to be avoided. His unpredictability and inscrutability means that people feel lost in a dangerous universe. Looking for help, they turn to the wisdom of the elders, deposited in the ancestors, and sometimes interpreted by the diviners. The ancestors they 'know' and can easily relate to; they are vitally interested in the survival of their relatives in a hostile world, for their own survival is intimately tied up with that of their kin. But for the living the ancestors present a dilemma; they do not always act predictably and in accordance with what is really desired. Furthermore, they are not omnipotent, and cannot always provide one with the protection one needs from the malignant forces working against people. One continually has a sense of helplessness and weakness. The great need is for strength, more power to cope; and when the ancestors seem inadequate or overbearing, a person turns to the diviners or to traditional 'medicines', which enable one to obtain the coveted power. The power which is thereby obtained is one's very life, one's existence, one's self - but at the same time it is the family, the lineage and above all the ancestors to whom one is inextricably bound in this 'power-play'.
No ‘impersonal force’ exists in relation to humans. True, the manipulation of
the power residing in other people, animals and things is something real; but
this manipulation only strengthens and fortifies (or conversely, diminishes) a
person’s own individualised power. The African spirit world abounds in spirits
of many descriptions; these spirits too are never ‘impersonal’ but may be said
to be universally ‘personalised’ or ‘individualised’. Behind all of these spirits
and powers is the source of them all, God, however vaguely or otherwise per­
ceived.

3.2 A better alternative?

The question is whether the traditional African really has adequate solutions to
the perplexing problems being faced. Is one not caught in a vicious circle out
of which there is no escape? Are not the preoccupation with the spirit world
and the continual quest for power evidence that a person is not really satisfied,
and is very much afraid? This is indeed a universal human compulsion. In
other words, the need is for power which is beyond that of the spirits, the
diviners and the sorcerers. No matter how much a person tries to be protected
from evil by the use of medicines and by rituals aimed at placating the spirits, it
may never be known whether one has done the right thing, or whether one’s
charm or medicine is stronger than that of the adversary, whoever that might
be. One’s world is plagued with uncertainty; at least it is when things are
going wrong. As Kalu (1979:20) puts it, ‘The Africans, with their precarious
vision of a human world besieged by evil forces, sought more potent pro­
tectors’.

It is into this gap in the existential world of Africa that African Christianity
must speak. To be relevant to all of Africa’s needs the biblical message must
provide a comprehensive and qualitatively higher alternative to the solutions
the traditional person seeks. It must provide a dynamic, life-giving power that
secures deliverance from evil and allows one to feel safe in a hostile world. It
must furthermore provide for the existential ‘this-worldly’ needs, and not only
for the ‘life-to-come’. It must counter the dominant fear and suspicion that the
traditionalist feels. It is in these and a host of other areas that a dynamic
pneumatology must speak. Commenting on the alleged prevalence of syn­
cretism in African Christianity, Ukpong (1984:510) observes that the
phenomenon is ‘not so much a sign of lack of Christian commitment as an
expression of the fact that Christianity, as transmitted to the African, has not
been made to respond fully to his culturally-based religious aspirations’. Christian­ity, and particularly pneumatology, must respond fully to the
‘culturally-based religious aspirations’ of the African. And this is precisely
what the African Spirit-type churches are all about.
4 THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT IN AFRICA

4.1 The good news in Africa

In understanding the spirit and power concepts in African traditional thought, we are now in a better position to appreciate the attempt made by the Spirit-type churches to fill the gap between these concepts with their inherent inadequacies, and the somewhat sterile pneumatology imported to Africa from the West. Some of these inadequacies are the incessant fear of the malevolent use of power and of an unseen evil force, the unpredictability of the ancestors, the perpetual dilemma of a God who is at the same time near and yet remote, the lack of relationship and fellowship with such a God who may also do nothing to prevent calamity and distress, the underlying fatalistic trends frequently found in the African traditional world view, and the need for a person's 'this-worldly' needs to be met. The African traditionalist is in a situation of weakness, or of utter dependance on a power or powers operating from outside to which one does not have permanent access, and which is always conditional. In short, a person's need is for power which will cater for the necessities of life and protect from its vicissitudes - a life that is full, prosperous, healthy, peaceful and secure. The African spirit world seems to form as clear a praeparatio evangelica as can be found anywhere. The message that the Spirit-type churches proclaimed was the power of the Spirit given to a person permanently and unconditionally.

Surely the Christian message has something to say to the inadequacies of traditional African spirit concepts! And to presume that African Christians themselves have done nothing to redress these inadequacies, is ethnocentric arrogance indeed. Any reinterpretation of spirit concepts by African Christians in the light of the biblical revelation can only be understood and evaluated when such reinterpretations are seen in the light of the traditional world view. We will only then be able to evaluate whether seeing pneumatology (and more importantly, doing pneumatology) from the perspective of the Spirit-type African churches is in fact a bridge back to the 'heathen' past, or not. A comparison and contrast of the practices of the Spirit-type churches with those of the traditionalists (such as a comparison of the practices of the diviners and those of the prophets) will put the pneumatology of the former into its correct perspective. The contrast between traditional spirit-possession and the receiving of the Spirit in these churches will also be apparent. The ancestor cult, the traditional response to man's refusal to accept the finality of death, must also be reinterpreted in the African milieu; and here too, Spirit-type churches have taken the lead. The African spirit universe is a 'personal',
individualised universe, in which an individual as a personal, living force is dependant upon all other forces for one's very existence. The message of the receiving of the power of the Holy Spirit, a power greater than any of the powers which threaten this existence, Moya giving unprecedented strength to moya, is good news indeed!

4.2 The Spirit at a person’s disposal?

This brings us to the final consideration in our discussion of the African concepts of power. Once again we must begin with the earlier evaluations of researchers. Western observers have often regarded the African independent churches - and by implication also the Pentecostal churches worldwide - as conceiving of the Holy Spirit as an ‘impersonal force’ which can be ‘possessed’ and ‘given’ at random by the will of man. The Holy Spirit thus becomes a manipulable force not unlike the concept of ‘life-force’ or ‘vital force’ as conceived by African traditional religion and discussed in this chapter.

Sundkler (1961:244) speaking of Umoya (Spirit) says that it ‘is recognised as being a power which is independent of most of the orthodox signs of Christian behaviour’. He says that ‘inspiration by the Holy Spirit, UMOYA, is interpreted in terms of possession, as a state of mind’ (1961:260). Andersson (1958:109) says that in the Ngunza movement ‘the doctrine of the Spirit is the wide gate through which a number of pre-Christian conceptions have entered ... it was an axiom that the Spirit should express itself in external phenomena, in the ecstasy, and above all in the body-shaking’. Other ecstatic manifestations in this movement include speaking with tongues, dreams and visions, and disclosing of sins by ecstatic prophesying. Signs that the Spirit has departed from a person are ‘the absence of such phenomena as well as all sickness and weakness’. He says that the result of this emphasis on the Spirit is that God’s Word in the Bible is ‘pushed into the background’ (1958:110). Andersson (1958:112) alleges further that the doctrine of the Spirit in the Ngunza movement actually resulted in moral decadence. Sundkler (1961:244) says the same thing: ‘UMOYA is even morally neutral’, so that a prophet could take a new wife whenever he wished even though he definitely possessed the Spirit. Martin (1964:113) says that in Zionist and prophetic churches ‘the Holy Spirit is regarded as power par excellence. As the man in African traditional religion is most concerned to increase his vital power ... so the Zionist is most deeply concerned to get hold of the power of the Spirit’. 
She by implication refers to the same impersonal, amoral character of the Spirit when she speaks of the ‘getting hold’ of the Spirit for power to realise a person’s hopes and dreams, the ‘possessing’ of the Spirit like an ‘impersonal power’, and the visible and audible manifestations of this same ‘Spirit’. She considers these to be almost anti-Christian tendencies (Martin 1964:161).

Presumably on the basis of the arguments of Sundkler and Andersson, Oosthuizen (1968:122) considers that in the independent churches ‘the Spirit’s activity is not related to moral guidance but rather to vital force’. He comments on Andersson’s research among the Ngunza-Khaki churches that the Spirit is given by human initiative and not at the initiative of God, and that Christian pneumatology is thereby ‘observed and distorted here beyond recognition’ (Oosthuizen 1968:133); and he concludes that in ‘the African nativistic movements spirit possession, the general feature in African religion, has found a new emphasis’ (Oosthuizen 1968:134). Here again he quotes Sundkler (1961:200) in support.

Sundkler, Martin and Oosthuizen have all softened their approach and attitude to African independent churches. In assessing their views I may have reacted rather negatively; but I do want to emphasise that they together with Andersson were pioneers in this field. Had I the limited evidence that they had in the fifties and sixties, and granting my Conservative Evangelical background, I would undoubtedly have come to the same conclusions. They are the giants upon whose shoulders this dwarf is standing in order to try to see further! Nevertheless, the shortcomings in their approach must be considered in the light of the most recent research. The evaluations of pneumatology in Spirit-type churches which were first suggested by Sundkler, supported by Andersson and Martin, amplified by Oosthuizen, and which came to have a somewhat general and uncritical acceptance right into the seventies, cannot today be countenanced by evidence from the churches themselves.

Daneel (1988:118) states bluntly that the idea that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal, manipulable force ‘is inapplicable to the prophetic Shona churches’. His research demonstrates that in these churches ‘inspiration or revelation by the Holy Spirit is ascribed to God’s initiative and not to man’ (1988:119). As for the allegedly amoral (or even immoral) character of the ‘Spirit’ in these churches, Daneel (1988:119-120) says that, to the contrary, the ‘decisive criteria’ of the churches are the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The prophets in exercising their ministry under the inspiration of the Spirit, are very con-
cerned to maintain Christian morality, particularly as is evidenced by the public confessions of sin and the use of disciplinary measures for transgressors. Martin (1975:131) in her later work on Kimbanguism, quotes from the church's constitution, which emphasises 'moral purity' through 'the power of the Holy Spirit'. She had earlier written that Kimbanguism had deliberately 'shelved' the Bible and 'slackened' in its moral code (Martin 1964:140). Her research clearly reveals that her earlier assumptions no longer apply, at least not to Kimbanguism. Cazziol (1987:107) found that among the Zionist churches of Swaziland the power of the Spirit was also associated with morality. All this indicates that 'the allegation that there is no moral involvement with the Spirit is a theological fiction' (Daneel 1988:120).

4.3 The powerful and gentle Spirit

Clearly, the Spirit-type churches are founded on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This is what in their own estimation distinguishes them from other churches, as it does indeed with all Pentecostalism. The Holy Spirit is unanimously associated with 'power: physical, moral, ethnic, spiritual' (Cazziol 1987:107). Armitage (1976:336) considers that in the Swazi Zionist churches the Holy Spirit is 'the ambiguous, numinous force that pervades everything'. Distinctions between 'personal' and 'impersonal' power in Africa may be splitting hairs. Power, if coming from God and bestowed on people must be personal, and not some vague idea of 'vital force' or 'ambiguous, numinous force'. A demonstration of God's power through his Spirit will often convince the African that God is indeed more powerful than the surrounding evil forces, and therefore is worthy of worship, faith and service. The genuine power of the Holy Spirit can effectively meet existential needs in the African spirit world. Without the power of the Spirit the African Christian can easily revert to the religion of the forefathers, which was more 'powerful' than the somewhat sterile, rational Christianity imported to Africa from the West. The African needs to discover in the milieu of Africa that the Christian God is indeed all-powerful; and this omnipotent God manifests his presence through the Holy Spirit working graciously and actively in the church.

A final word of caution needs to be sounded here. If there is a criticism that is often justifiably levelled at Pentecostals, it is that they have sometimes expounded a theology of success and power at the expense of a theology of the cross. There are not always instant solutions to life's vicissitudes. Spirituality is not to be measured merely in terms of success. People are not only convinced by the triumphs of Christianity, but also by its trials. A one-sided
pneumatology is a danger to all of us, whether in Africa or elsewhere. The Holy Spirit is also a gentle dove, a Spirit of humility, patience and meekness, of love, joy and peace. Overemphasising the power of the Spirit often leads to bitter disappointment and disillusionment when that power is not evidently and immediately manifested. Our pneumatology must not only provide power when there is a lack of it; it must also be able to sustain us through life's tragedies and failures, and especially when there is no visible success.