

CHAPTER SIX

The Holy Spirit in African context

1 THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HOLISM

1.1 The necessity for biblical pneumatology

One wonders how many ‘sophisticated’ Western Christians without theological training (and those with it) really understand biblical pneumatology as accurately as some would like to see the African independent churches understand it. My own experience has been that however the Holy Spirit may be ‘misunderstood’ by these churches, this misunderstanding, if it exists, is never deliberate, and often disappears after biblical teaching. The Bible remains the ultimate source of authority to most of these churches; and thus it is that biblical instruction often brings a more balanced approach. Daneel (1989:329-330) found that through theological training ‘a more balanced perception of the close relationship between the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit’ resulted - as well as the Holy Spirit being considered ‘a living, personal being’ (1989:340). Daneel (1989:340) concedes that the theological training syllabus of Fambidzano (an ecumenical organisation of African independent churches in Zimbabwe) could include ‘a more comprehensive course in pneumatology ... one which comes to grips with the relationship between biblical Spirit power and indigenous African notions of life-force, inspirational spirit power and magical power’.

Such a biblical, African pneumatology is surely needed. The problem is that we have so often failed to give credit where credit is due, and have not acknowledged the very real and vital contribution that the Spirit-type churches in Africa have made to such a dynamic pneumatology. This final chapter is an attempt to give some guidelines as to how a pneumatology that is both biblical and African may be arrived at. Tutu (1987:52) says 'Christianity, to be truly African, must be incarnated in Africa ... Christianity should be seen as fulfilling the highest and best in the spiritual and religious aspirations of the black, and yet stand in judgement on all that diminishes him and makes him less than what God intended him to be.'

1.2 African pneumatology and Western rationalism

The first chapter on 'the Holy Spirit and the African world view' demonstrated that African spirituality is of an essentially suprarational disposition. The difficulty with Western approaches to African religious phenomena - and in this case pneumatological manifestations in Africa - is the dualistic rationalising that cannot adequately penetrate a holistic world view. This African world view does not allow for the Western tendency to separate physical and spiritual, or the personal and the social; there is a presumed interpenetration of both. Even for African Christians, the Spirit pervades all of life, and not just the 'spiritual' part of it. Westerners feel uncomfortable with the innovations which are encountered in African Spirit-type churches, where the need for 'divine involvement' in all of life is met. In African psychology we have seen that *umoya* is that which a person receives from God and has in common with him, the personal, 'vital force' which gives a person being and life, strength and power, harmonising one with humanity and with the universe.

We also saw there that African theology has pointed to the independent churches as the 'raw material' for a contextual theology in Africa, but has not really addressed the specifically African issues raised in pneumatology. Instead it has been involved in theologising, and how to theologise in Africa. This has left many unanswered questions; for this theology has tended to move largely in the orbit of Western-originated churches. What we have described as a theological vacuum left by both African and Western theology has been addressed by the raw, incarnated, 'grassroots' theology of the Spirit-type churches in Africa. This too is theology from the 'underside', a peoples' theology. These churches have made possible a dialogue between the African traditional thought world and Christianity at an existential level. This has largely been more effective than 'pure' African theology, which has often tended to be an apology for African traditional religion.

It is my conviction that theology, and particularly Western theology, has missed much in biblical pneumatology that speaks directly into the world of Africa - and in fact into the world view of just about everyone except Western peoples. A Pentecostal leader from Argentina recently addressed a predominantly Western audience and grappled with the problem of their seeming indifference to and unfamiliarity with the spirit world. The Western world is too earthy, too logical, too rational. There is something in the Bible, as well as in human experience in Africa and elsewhere, that transcends all that, and defies all our explanations and rationalisations.

The Episcopal theologian and priest Morton Kelsey (1981:169) says that the Western world view is that 'man gets his knowledge of all reality, God included, through his sense experience and his reason making inferences upon it. According to this belief man has no direct contact with the spiritual reality which lies behind the material world'. John Wimber (1985:77), a leading American Charismatic, says that the modern Western world view is dominated by secularism, which assumes that 'we live in a universe closed off from divine intervention, in which truth is arrived at through empirical means and rational thought.' Direct experience of the spirit world, such as is found in Africa, is so often missing from Western theology. God is only concerned with 'spiritual' and 'sacred' matters; a person can look after all 'secular' needs by one's own increasing knowledge. Unfortunately this 'sacred-secular dichotomy' (McVeigh 1974:172) of Western Christianity has been foisted onto Africa.

There is a real danger that Christianity, if not disentangled from Western theology, will become irrelevant in Africa. African people came to regard Western missionaries with their logical presentations of 'theology' as out of touch with the real, holistic world that they experienced. Their deepest felt needs were not addressed; their questions remained unanswered. As Daneel (1983:58) has observed:

The missionary readily proclaimed a gospel of the *soul's salvation*, but appeared to be silent on issues of politics, man's physical needs and his daily struggle for survival. Looking at it from the holistic African point of view this moralistic gospel did not spell out convincingly the salvation of the *entire man!* It was insufficiently related to the perplexities caused by illness and misfortune.

It is precisely because the real implications of the questions arising out of the African holistic world view have not been fully grasped by much of the theology that is taught in Africa, that the full significance of the Christian answer has also been missed.

1.3 Spirit-type churches and Holistic Christianity

In the second chapter, 'the Holy Spirit and African Pentecostalism', we briefly surveyed the generation of Pentecostalism in a Black 'storefront' church in Los Angeles, and the American connection between 'Zion' and 'Pentecost'. Pentecostalism's roots in Afro-American religion made the transplanting of its central tenets in Africa more easily assimilated, not always to the satisfaction of Western Pentecostal missionaries, who often tried to distance themselves from what Parham had disparagingly called 'crude negroisms' (MacRobert 1988:60). The affinities and common historical and theological roots shared by African independent Spirit-type churches and other Pentecostals are too obvious to be ignored; although the passing of time and the proliferation of African independent churches have accentuated the differences. Beckmann's study (1975:120) on a Ghanaian Spirit-type church poses the question whether the Eden Revival church is an 'indigenous Afro-Christian church' or a Pentecostal church. His conclusion: 'It is both, because Pentecostalism is, in large part, an Afro-Christian phenomenon! Its origins are, in large part, among Afro-Americans, and it has grown, in large part, in those areas of the world influenced by Africa'.

These factors have caused me to include African Pentecostal churches in my broad use of the term 'Spirit-type churches'. The Spirit-type churches went a long way towards meeting the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of Africa, offering a solution to *all* of life's problems and a way to cope in a threatening and hostile world. They proclaimed that the same God who saves the 'soul' also heals the body. He is interested in providing answers to the fears and insecurities inherent in the traditional world view. As Ndiokwere (1981:279) observes,

A problem is not solved by pretending that it is not there, which is what the mission Churches do. The Aladura prophet is, therefore, a more realistic counsellor, because he accepts the supplicant as one with genuine or existential problems, and tries conscientiously to find solutions to them.

The one who forgives sin is also concerned about poverty, oppression and liberation from all of a person's afflictions. It is this message which makes the Spirit-type churches so attractive to Africans. With little or no formal theology, a definite theology (especially pneumatology) is exhibited in their practices and in their interpretation of the working of the Holy Spirit in daily life. This too, we considered in the second chapter. Ndiokwere (1981:276) says that the African independent churches must 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 ... the Holy Spirit can speak directly to Africans. The despised blacks can have their own prophets and religious leaders. They can now worship freely without unjustified and unwarranted restrictions. Not only white people can be great and powerful!

Although the central focus of these churches is on the Spirit, generally speaking a central place is also given to Jesus Christ. In some of these churches, however, there may indeed be a largely unconscious weakening of Christology as a result of an overemphasis on the Spirit. The Spirit is not generally seen as an ambiguous, numinous power; but he manifests his presence and power personally, making a dynamic relationship between God and his people possible. As McVeigh (1974:180) has succinctly remarked:

The insight of Africa - that life is a totality, that there can be no ultimate separation between the sacred and the secular, and that religion must be brought to bear on all of man's problems - is Africa's great contribution to the West, a belief and faith that the West desperately needs.

Turner (1967b:368) says that the 'form of pentecostalism' of the Nigerian spiritual churches, 'uniting the dynamic of the Holy Spirit to the vitality of the African view of human life, may have something to say to older churches, both in Africa and elsewhere, which no longer expect anything really to happen in their midst'.

2 THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS

2.1 Old Testament and African prophets

In order to effectively evaluate the manifestations of the Spirit and the pneumatology I have attempted to portray in this study, it is necessary for us to

have a somewhat cursory look at Spirit manifestations in the Bible. It is not my intention to give an exhaustive treatment of biblical pneumatology; many have already done that, and it is not my domain. What I do want to demonstrate, however, is that the biblical record does have some significant things to say about the issues raised here. These things will be looked at and compared with pneumatology as described in this study, as enacted and experienced in Africa, particularly as this was described in chapter three, 'the Holy Spirit in African Manifestation'. My own position in relation to the biblical texts will also be apparent; like most of the Spirit-type churches in Africa, my approach will be that of an Evangelical and a Charismatic.

There is no doubt that the Old Testament prophets were 'men of the Spirit', men on whom the Holy Spirit had come in a special way to enable them to speak the word of God fearlessly in the midst of a too often corrupt and oppressive society. In the New Testament, these prophets were referred to as people who 'spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit' (2 Peter 1:21). This too is the dominant characteristic of the African Spirit-type prophets; they are people 'of the Spirit'. Their following is often determined by the extent to which their pronouncements are perceived by the people to be the utterances of the Holy Spirit, and by their ability to demonstrate the power of the Spirit by meeting concrete human needs such as sickness and other types of affliction. These factors largely determine whether a person is recognised as a man or woman of God. It is true that in some of these churches at least, the outward determining factors sometimes overshadow the inner graces of the Spirit; but this problem exists in churches all over the world, and not just in Africa!

The presence of the Spirit in the lives of the Hebrew prophets was recognised by all, even pagan rulers. Abraham was recognised as a spokesman for God, a prophet who could pray for the healing of a Canaanite king and his family (Genesis 20:7, 17). The presence of the 'spirit of God' (or 'the gods') was recognised by the king of Egypt as the reason why Joseph was supernaturally enabled to interpret his dreams (Genesis 41:38). The Babylonian rulers recognised the same ability in Daniel, ascribing it to the fact that 'the spirit of the holy gods' was in him (Daniel 4:8-9, 18; 5:11,14). Alasdair Heron (1983:13), a Reformed theologian of Erlangen, points out that 'these talents and abilities are understood to be imparted by special divine gift. The line between 'natural' and 'supernatural' is not drawn in quite the way that we might incline to draw it'. Obviously, African prophets are perceived as having similar special talents and abilities, which enable them to effectively function within the holistic world in which they are immersed. Indeed, without these perceived abilities they would have no followers. Moses identifies a 'prophet' with the

fact that God puts his Spirit on (some) people (Numbers 11:29). Even Balaam, a prophet used by the Moabites to attempt to bring a curse on Israel, prophesied blessing when 'the Spirit of God came on him' (Numbers 24:2).

Throughout Old Testament history we read of the Spirit 'coming upon' different prophets of Israel, causing them to declare the words of God. This too is a prominent result of the Spirit 'coming upon' men and women of Africa. Although emphasis is often given to meeting physical needs, African prophets are also people who declare the words of God to the people. Proclamation is a very important part of the African prophetic function. This proclamation, however, is sometimes limited by the fact that the African prophets are often not theologically trained. Comprehensive biblical and contextual instruction is needed to obviate this seeming weakness.

The ministries of both Elijah and Elisha were characterised by miracles and healings, more than were any other Old Testament prophets. The supernatural prophetic activity of Elijah is associated with the Holy Spirit (1 Kings 18:12), by which rain was withheld and given again by Yahweh, fire came from Yahweh, and Elijah was translated to heaven. His successor Elisha requests and receives a 'double portion' of this Spirit (2 Kings 2:9, 15). His prophetic ministry is even more spectacular. He is enabled through the Spirit to divide the waters of the Jordan river, to purify polluted water and poisoned food, to multiply oil for a poverty-stricken widow, to enable a barren woman to conceive, to raise a dead boy to life, to multiply bread to feed the hungry, to heal a Syrian official of a skin disease, to cause an iron axehead to float, and to strike the enemy with blindness. On one occasion Elisha is reported to have prophesied after a minstrel played (2 Kings 3:15) - an interesting analogy to the use in some Spirit-type churches of music and dancing to create an atmosphere for prophesying! The natural love and talent that African people have for rhythmic music and dancing makes this type of liturgy more attractive. It is very significant in the African Spirit-type church context that the charismatic prophetic leadership of Elijah and Elisha was characterised by frequent recourse to symbolic ritual acts, a feature also common in the African prophetic churches. I have not attempted to describe these in any detail in this study; and much research has been done in this particular area. A problem that needs clarification is that of to what extent these ritual acts are perceived as having 'magical' power rather than as being symbols of the power of God. This is also determined by to what extent the rituals are seen as a continuation of traditional religious practices. Writes Ndiokwere (1981:249) 'A prophet sometimes performed his miraculous acts by external means. Everything that

belonged to him was, so to speak, charged with power'. It is possibly not too far-fetched to say that the African prophets more nearly resemble (or aspire to resemble) Elisha and Elijah than any other biblical characters.

Micah (3:8) also acknowledges that he is 'filled with power, with the Spirit of Yahweh' enabling him to carry out his prophetic mission. Ezekiel makes frequent reference to the Spirit coming into him, guiding and moving him along in all his prophesying; in parallel passages the Spirit is equated with 'the hand of Yahweh' (e.g. 3:14), and is also called 'the Spirit of Yahweh' (11:5). Symbolic prophetic rituals are a frequent characteristic of his ministry. All of this is extremely significant for the African prophetic movement; for, as Ndiokwere (1981:233) has noted, 'The African prophets clearly claim to be 'followers' of the Israelite prophetic figures and religious leaders'. Symbols used in some African prophetic churches - the robes, staffs, ropes, beards, and so on - are deliberate attempts to demonstrate continuity with the biblical tradition. The weakness of this approach may lie in that it is sometimes unable to distinguish between the form and the content of the biblical prophetic message.

Very often, then, both in the Old Testament and in Africa, the coming of the Spirit is directly linked to what is seen as an extraordinary ability to prophesy. This is regarded as the main manifestation of the Holy Spirit. When the prophet Joel (2:28) predicts the pouring out of the Spirit upon all humankind - a prophecy Peter declares was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16) - the proof that this has happened will be 'your sons and daughters will prophesy'. The coming of the Spirit would therefore also remove sexual and social discrimination. Heron (1983:20) indicates that this pouring out of the Spirit offered a '*corporate* hope ... not merely the inspiration of individuals'. This too forms a biblical analogy to the corporate power concept in Africa. Here, the Holy Spirit is not perceived as given for individual empowerment only, but for the overall good of the whole community. This community orientation is surely one of the significant lessons for the West to learn from Africa! The office of prophet in the Old Testament as well as in African Spirit-type churches is clearly regarded as of paramount importance. It is probably true to say that the prophets were in control in the Israelite world, as they are in many Spirit-type churches. Even the great kings of Israel were designated and anointed, commended and rebuked, by the prophets.

And yet Joel's prophesy of the pouring out of the Spirit also indicates what the eminent Catholic theologian Montague (1976:86) refers to as the 'democratization' of prophecy; all God's people should prophesy, and not just a select few.

This is a dimension of the Spirit's work to which many in the African Spirit-type churches have yet to come - although potentially any believer, man or woman, can become a prophet through the Holy Spirit. This thought was later to be developed by Paul (1 Corinthians 14:31).

2.2 The New Testament church and Spirit-type churches

The power and direction of the Holy Spirit in the early church is evident throughout the book of Acts, which some have suggested should be called 'the Acts of the Holy Spirit' (Horton 1976:136). Taylor (1972:201) says that Luke 'lays special emphasis upon the direct communications which the apostles received from the Holy Spirit, and on the gifts of healing, exorcism, prophecy and speaking with tongues'. It is for these reasons that Pentecostals emphasise its content in their pneumatology. There is also much here that is relevant to the African Spirit-type churches. The Holy Spirit manifested himself to the early church in Jerusalem in tangible ways, particularly by what is often referred to as 'signs and wonders'. Healings, exorcisms and other miraculous occurrences are frequently referred to. It is clear that, as in African Spirit-type churches, the New Testament churches are concerned to demonstrate the power of God visibly. A lame man was healed through Peter and John (Acts 3). After severe persecution the church prayed for more boldness to speak God's word, requesting that healings, signs and wonders be done; the Spirit assured them of his presence when they were again 'all filled with the Holy Spirit' (4:29-31). The revealing of sin in the church (5:1-10) is rather reminiscent of the 'gate test' in some Spirit-type churches. The apostle Peter discerned by the Spirit that there was deception; so too, African prophets 'discern' the presence of sin in the lives of members 'by the Spirit'. Crowds of sick and demonised people were all healed, especially through the ministry of Peter (5:15-16). When it is necessary to appoint additional leaders in the church, the prime qualification is that they are 'known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom' (6:3). Stephen was such a man (6:5), 'full of God's grace and power' so that he 'did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people' (6:8); and his opponents 'could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke' (6:10). Before Stephen is stoned to death, it is again recorded that he was 'full of the Holy Spirit' as he has a vision of God in heaven (7:55). As in the Old Testament and in African Spirit-type churches, to be a person of the Spirit is the important prerequisite for leadership. This takes precedence over theological education!

When the church is scattered through the ensuing persecution, the church begins to break out from the confines of Jerusalem to the Judaean and Samaritan countryside. In Samaria, Stephen's colleague Philip proclaims

Christ accompanied by ‘miraculous signs’, including exorcisms and the healing of paralytics and cripples (8:6-7). Wherever Philip went there were ‘great signs and miracles’ (8:13). Peter and John visit the Samaritan disciples, and there is some perceptible evidence that they have ‘received the Holy Spirit’ (8:14-18). Philip’s encounter with the Ethiopian official is as a result of clear direction through the Spirit (8:29); and Philip is miraculously transported from there by the Spirit (8:39-40). Peter’s ministry in Judaean towns results in the healing of a paralytic (9:33-34), the resurrection of Dorcas (9:36-41), a vision revealing God’s acceptance of Gentiles (10:9-16), the Spirit instructing him to go with the servants of Cornelius (10:19-20), and the subsequent receiving of the Spirit by a large gathering of Gentiles with the manifestation of ‘speaking in tongues and praising God’ (10:44-46). There is an interesting connection between receiving the Spirit and speaking in tongues in the book of Acts. On three out of six occasions when people receive the Spirit they speak in tongues (2:4; 10:44-46; 19:6). Pentecostals have concluded that this is ‘proof’ of ‘initial evidence’, a position that is also held by many Spirit-type churches, at least officially. Nevertheless, Luke does give certain tangible ‘proofs’ of the receiving of the Spirit. Peter is later supernaturally brought out of prison in Jerusalem by ‘an angel of the Lord’ (12:6-11).

The events surrounding Paul and his associates are no less Spirit-led. Paul’s Damascus road conversion is followed by the visit of Ananias, who is sent so that he may ‘see again and be filled with the Spirit’ (9:17). Barnabas is given responsibility in the fledgling church in Antioch because he is ‘a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith’ (11:24). A prophet named Agabus predicts a famine ‘through the Spirit’ (11:28), and the churches make preparations. The record says that at Antioch there were ‘prophets and teachers’, and that Paul and Barnabas were sent on their mission by the Holy Spirit through a prophetic word (13:1-4). In fact, the close connection that exists between the Spirit and prophecy in the Old Testament and in Africa also exists in the New Testament. Heron (1983:43) considers prophecy to be probably the most prominent manifestation of the Spirit in Acts. The apostles encounter opposition in Cyprus from Elymas; and Paul ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’, identifies him as a sorcerer, and speaks a predictive word to him that God will temporarily remove his sight. This immediately happens, resulting in the conversion of the Roman proconsul (13:8-12). This is an interesting analogy to our previous discussion in chapter three of the detection of wizardry present in some Spirit-type churches. The results were equally as devastating! At Iconium the preaching of Paul and Barnabas was accompanied by ‘miraculous signs and wonders’ (14:3). In Lystra, a man born crippled is healed at the command of Paul (14:8-10).

Paul and his companions are led by the Holy Spirit (possibly through prophecy) to preach in Europe, rather than in other Asian provinces (16:6-10). In Philippi, a spirit in a slave girl enabling her to predict the future is exorcised (16:16-18). This incident reminds us of the continuity-confrontation tension that also exists in the African Spirit-type churches between the Spirit of God and all other spirits claiming the allegiance of a person. In Ephesus Paul lays hands on twelve men, and 'the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied' (19:6). There 'God did extraordinary miracles through Paul', including healings and exorcisms through cloths he had touched (19:11-12), a rather interesting example of a symbolic ritual that has many parallels in African churches, such as the use of blessed water, cloths, staffs, ropes, and paper for healing purposes (Daneel 1974:232). Another symbol widespread in Africa was practised in Ephesus, the ritual burning of objects associated with sorcery (Acts 19:19). I have attended many such burnings of objects associated with African witchcraft, vivid demonstrations of a total break with past dependencies and of a new dependence on Christ. At Troas, a young Christian is raised from the dead (20:9-12).

Paul undertakes his journey to Jerusalem 'compelled by the Spirit', who has told him that prison and hardships await him (20:22-23). The disciples at Tyre 'through the Spirit' warn Paul not to go to Jerusalem (21:4); and at Caesarea the prophet Agabus predicts Paul's imprisonment (21:10-11). It seems that predictive, personal prophesy was a common occurrence in the New Testament church. This may differ somewhat from the practice in some African Spirit-type churches of people going to a prophet for direction, in much the same way that they would visit a diviner. Montague (1976:154) considers that 'directive' prophecy 'is conspicuously absent in the New Testament'. There is no instance of anyone going to a "prophet" to ask for a decision'. It does seem, however, that on occasions Paul received specific prophetic direction by the Holy Spirit on his missionary journeys (Acts 13:1-4; 16:6-7). Even Montague (1976:296) admits that these directions were probably given through a direct, inspired prophecy. This would indicate that some parallel with the African practices can be found. Here too in Acts we read of Philip's 'four unmarried daughters who prophesied' (21:9); prophecy was not restricted to men! Later, when Paul is a prisoner on the voyage to Rome, he predicts the safety of the ship's company (27:22-26), survives a snake bite and heals many sick on the island of Malta (28:3-9).

Horton (1976:166) says that the Book of Acts 'emphasizes that the Holy Spirit in the very nature of things is closely bound up with every aspect of the life of the Church and the Christians'. Wimber (1985:117) adds, after surveying 'signs and wonders' in the book of Acts, that they 'were a part of daily life, expected

by the church They were the catalyst for evangelism'. In African Spirit-type churches, healings in particular are one of the most effective recruitment techniques practised, as we have seen in Daneel's work (1974:186). In fact, as Heron (1983:44) points out, there is a fundamental connection in Acts between the Spirit and the church: 'It is *in the church* that it is at work, and *through the church's mission* that it comes upon others' (emphases in original). The Holy Spirit is here intrinsically involved in the holistic world view of the Bible, as he is in the African Spirit-type churches.

2.3 Spiritual gifts and Spirit-type churches

Heron (1983:45) shows that the central feature of the work of the Holy Spirit is 'woven into the whole fabric' of Pauline theology. Paul, more clearly than elsewhere in the New Testament, reveals 'that the Old Testament ruach of Yahweh was nothing other than the Spirit of Christ' (Heron 1983:47). He does not therefore exclusively focus on charismatic manifestations of the Spirit. They are, however, often present in his writings. In Paul's epistles the main emphasis of life in the Spirit is on a new relationship to God, and the fruit evident in a Christian believer's life. I will concentrate on the manifestations of the Spirit that are referred to there, particularly those that are relevant to this discussion.

In his letter to the Romans (12:6) Paul speaks of the different gifts of God's grace that Christians have, of which the first mentioned is prophesying which must be done 'in proportion to his faith'. In his first letter to the Corinthians (1:7) he says that they did 'not lack any spiritual gift'; and this letter contains most of Paul's teaching on what he refers to as the 'spiritual gifts' (12:1). Evidently, women were permitted to prophesy in the early church (11:5). It was the work of the Spirit to give different gifts to the church; and Paul here lists nine different kinds, including 'gifts of healing', 'miraculous powers', 'prophecy', 'distinguishing between spirits', 'speaking in different kinds of tongues' and 'interpretation of tongues'. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list; they are all the work of the Spirit, who 'gives them to each one, just as he determines' (12:8-11). Included in the gifted people 'God has appointed' in the church are 'prophets ... workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing ... and those speaking in different kinds of tongues' (12:28). This passage is particularly significant, as Taylor (1972:202) has pointed out, because of Paul's 'complete indifference to the distinction we now draw between natural and supernatural'. All these manifestations of the Spirit, Paul says, must be motivated by the greatest grace of love or they are useless (13:1-3).

Paul encourages the Corinthians to 'eagerly desire' the gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy (14:1). Contrasting prophecy with speaking in tongues, Paul says that speaking in tongues is speaking to God in languages that nobody understands, for the edification of the speaker alone. Prophecy, however, is speaking to men for their 'strengthening, encouragement and comfort', and edifies the church (14:3-4). There is a clear reference here to the pastoral function of prophecy, such as is often found in the African Spirit-type churches. It is in this respect that the African prophet is able to meet the existential needs of people arising out of their particularly African situation. The prophet in giving, through the Spirit, a word from God for a given need, is providing pastoral care and oversight that is often inadequate or even entirely absent in a 'mission church' context. Paul states here that prophecy is given for 'edification', which Montague (1976:174) indicates is 'anything that contributes to the increase of faith, hope, love and unity in the community'. This too is often the function of prophecy in the African Spirit-type churches. The context of these verses does not allow us to interpret 'prophecy' as meaning only 'preaching', but rather as the utterance of a direct revelation from God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Montague (1976:153) says that the gift of prophecy 'involves a sudden revelation at the moment'. Taylor (1972:214) says that the evidence from the first two centuries AD suggests that New Testament prophets spoke 'under some form of direct inspiration'.

Paul wants everyone to speak in tongues, but rather to prophesy (14:5). Throughout this chapter 'speaking in tongues' refers to unintelligible speech, which in the church service must be accompanied by interpretation if it is to be of any benefit (14:13, 27-28). Paul does not decry speaking in tongues; in fact he thanks God 'that I speak in tongues more than all of you' (14:18). But all the gifts of the Spirit, whether 'a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation ... must be done for the strengthening of the church' (14:26). 'Two or three prophets should speak', followed by an analysis of these prophesies (14:29). Horton (1976:233) says that this 'implies a deliberate consideration of what the Spirit is saying'. But Paul does not limit prophecy to those who are 'prophets': 'you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged' (14:31). His conclusion to the discussion on spiritual gifts is 'be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues' (14:39). There is a marked consciousness among African Spirit-type churches that they are practising these things in their worship. Pentecostals, in fact, consider 1 Corinthians 14 as one of the main 'proof texts' for their practices.

Personal, predictive prophesies may be referred to in the first letter to Timothy (1:18), which I, following most Evangelicals, consider to be the work of Paul. His instructions are 'in keeping with the prophesies once made about you, so

that in following them you may fight the good fight'. Further, he says that Timothy must 'not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders (presbytery) laid their hands on you' (4:14). It seems that some gift of the Spirit was imparted to Timothy through the laying on of hands, much as is experienced in Pentecostal and African Spirit-type churches. We are also reminded here of how the Spirit was given to Joshua through the laying on of the hands of Moses (Deuteronomy 34:9). Paul repeats this thought in the second letter when he says that Timothy must 'fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands' (1:6). One would seemingly have to put the charge levelled against African prophets of 'manipulating the Spirit' at the feet of the inspired writer of the letters to Timothy! Instead of a 'spirit of fear', God has given believers a 'spirit of power' (1:7). The fact that the power of God is imparted to believers through a symbolic act such as the laying on of hands is of great significance in Africa. Many such symbolic acts abound in the Spirit-type churches, resulting in God's 'power in action' being revealed in the alleviation of concrete physical and emotional needs.

Further references to manifestations of the Spirit in the New Testament are scant. The writer to the Hebrews reminds his readers that God had confirmed the message of the gospel with 'signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will' (2:4). Later he refers to those 'who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit' as also having experienced 'the powers of the coming age' (6:4-5). The power of the Spirit in the New Testament is often seen as a foretaste of the eschatological age, the coming of the kingdom of God, 'already' here and at the same time 'not yet' fully manifested. In the book of Revelation, John's visions are given to him while he is 'in the Spirit' (1:10; 4:2). He is also 'carried away in the Spirit' by an angel (17:3; 21:10) much in the fashion of the prophet Ezekiel. John prophesies to the seven churches in Asia, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches' (2:7, 11, 17 etc). Thus, prophecy attributed to the work of the Spirit occupies a central place in the last book of the Bible.

3 THE HOLY SPIRIT AND POWER

3.1 Biblical concepts of spirit and power

African concepts of power as described in chapter four must also be evaluated from a biblical perspective. The word for 'spirit' in both Hebrew (*ruach*) and Greek (*pneuma*) means 'wind' or 'breath', as does the word from which the

English 'spirit' is derived, the Latin *spiritus* (Taylor 1972:7). Heron (1983:3-4) points out that 'the root meaning of *ruach* probably had to do with the movement of air', but that it also referred to several other things, including wind, breath, life, the human spirit or self, and mood or temper. Roberts (1987:54) says that in the case of both *ruach* and *pneuma* 'the metaphorical meaning shifts from "breath" to the "principle of life" or "vitality".' Heron (1983:33) shows that, through the influence of the Septuagint, '*pneuma* came to cover the same broad range of senses and to function in much the same style as *ruach*'. Again, Roberts (1987:55) defines *pneuma* as 'the sign of human vitality ... the dynamic principle of life'. Immediately we sense that we are in touch with Africa, where the word for 'spirit' (*umoya* in Nguni languages) also means wind, the movement of air, as well as having a broad range of meanings analogous to the biblical meanings given here. Armitage (1976:337) notes in this connection that:

In the language of the Swazi the symbolic representation of spirit as *breeze* or *breath* indicates its all-pervasive character which unites people in corporate endeavour and religious feeling. It is also close to the Old Testament idea of life manifested in breath.

Taylor (1972:7) says that the Old Testament conceives of a person's spirit as 'the power of his personhood, the power of his separate otherness, the power by which he is recognised as himself'. This too is very close to how man's 'spirit' is conceived of in African traditional thought. *Umoya* is in African thought the power that gives life and existence to a person, the very essence or principle of life. This 'spirit' may not be separated from a person's personality or body; for the African sees a person holistically. This corresponds with the biblical view of humankind. The Hebrew thought world in particular is much more easily identified with the African world view than with dualistic Western ideas of humanity. The Hebrew *ruach* cannot absolutely be distinguished from *nephesh* (soul). In Isaiah 42:5 for example, the writer gives a parallel between *neshamah* (breath) and *ruach*, 'obviously meaning the same thing, life' (Montague 1976:52). The Old Testament increasingly focuses on the *ruach* of a person as being 'the centre of his personal self' (Heron 1983:6).

A prominent Pentecostal theologian, Stanley Horton (1976:19) points out that the 'spirit' in the Old Testament, in relation to living things, 'is always God's gift, coming from Him and returning to Him', and that in this sense 'spirit' means 'life energy or life-giving energy that God alone possesses permanently by His very nature'. The Spirit in the Old Testament 'is equated with God's power or personal presence in action' (Horton 1976:19). So too, Heron

(1983:7) says that '*ruach* is used to speak of God as present and active in the world and in particular among human beings'. Ndiokwere (1981:257) says that 'the biblical idea of "Spirit" is something concrete, an activity of God's power'. Similarly, Roberts (1987:55) says that 'God's action as the presence and power of *ruach* is prevalent in the Old Testament'.

The Greek word for power, *dunamis*, occurs 118 times in the New Testament, and refers to 'power, ability, physical or moral, as residing in a person or a thing' as well as 'power in action' (Vine 1981:11). We can speak of this concept as similar to 'power' or 'life-force' in African terms. We have sensed that the African concept of power, like the biblical one, is that of forcefulness, strength and ability. It carries with it the idea of dignity, authority and power over oppression. It also refers to power in action, and has its ultimate source in God. It cannot therefore be said to be at variance with the biblical concept of power; it is, in fact, almost identical with it. This is the power which is sought for and claimed through the Holy Spirit.

3.2 Spiritual leadership

The Spirit is often linked to the gift of leadership in the Bible, another evidence of power in action. A person who is actually leading people is a person with more power than those being led. In the Bible this power has its source in the Holy Spirit. Moses was recognised as a man on whom was the Spirit. God placed the Spirit that was on him also on seventy of Israel's elders, causing them to prophesy (Numbers 11:17, 25). Here we have an interesting analogy to the Spirit-type church concept of the 'Spirit' passing from one person to another, such as through the laying on of hands or through other symbolic ritual acts.

Joshua's main qualification for leadership was that he was 'a man in whom is the Spirit' (Numbers 27:18). In the time of Israel's judges (not always people of exemplary moral character) 'the Spirit of Yahweh came' on Othniel (Judges 3:10), Gideon (6:34), Jephthah (11:29), and Samson (14:6), enabling them to do exploits and lead the people in God's name. In the case of Samson the record indicates three times that 'the Spirit of Yahweh came on him in power' (14:6, 19; 15:14), causing him to have unusual bodily powers as he needed them. This same expression is used by Samuel to tell Saul what would happen when he met the company of prophets: 'the Spirit of Yahweh will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person' (1 Samuel 10:8). It was only this 'different person' who was able to lead Israel. It is the coming of the Spirit in power upon a man or

woman of God in Africa which is the *sine qua non* of church leadership. We also have here another biblical analogy of personal predictive prophecy such as is common in African Spirit-type churches, and also found in the New Testament.

After Samuel anoints David to be the new king over Israel, we read that 'from that day on the Spirit of Yahweh came upon David in power' (1 Samuel 16:13). One translation reads here that the Spirit of Yahweh 'rushed upon' David (Montague 1976:21). Heron (1983:13) makes the interesting observation that these instances are

... something very different from unusual gifts, skills or wisdom. It is a violent and temporary possession of a person by a force rushing upon him from without, manifested in an ecstatic form comparable with that associated with some kinds of prophecy.

This is how the coming of the Holy Spirit (or seizing by the Spirit) is often conceived and experienced in African Spirit-type churches. Once again, continuity with the biblical record is claimed; and we must admit to the striking parallels!

Oosthuizen (1968:128) maintains that in these and similar passages 'the word *spirit* merely explains his strange psychological experiences and his condition'. Heron (1983:5) agrees with this; but he adds that: 'The ancient Hebrew, however, like many African villagers today, would not make such a sharp or straightforward distinction as we are familiar with between what is "in the mind" and what comes "from outside".

The idea in all these passages is that it is the Spirit who enables people to rule rightly in God's theocracy. The prophet Zechariah (4:6) reminds the Jewish leader Zerubbabel that exercising God's rule is 'not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says Yahweh Almighty', the thought being that the Spirit's power far exceeds all other, human power. In African independent churches, leadership patterns sometimes follow traditional patterns; but they also often follow biblical patterns, when the leader is a man or woman upon whom the Spirit has come.

3.3 The Messianic Spirit

The Messianic prophesies in the book of Isaiah point to the fact that it is the presence of the Spirit of Yahweh that authenticates his divine mission: 'the Spirit of Yahweh will rest on him ... the Spirit of counsel and of power' (Isaiah

11:2). This mission carried out in the power of the Spirit has the significant inclusion of God's passionate concern to deliver the poor and the oppressed. This is an essential part of the concept of the Spirit in the Old Testament. The primary evidence of the fact that the 'Servant of Yahweh' has the Spirit is that 'he will bring justice to the nations ... he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth' (Isaiah 42:1, 4). In the passage declared by Jesus Christ to be fulfilled in himself, the prophet declares that the Spirit of Yahweh has anointed him to bring deliverance to the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives and the prisoners (Isaiah 61:1). In his first recorded public address Jesus reads this passage (Luke 4:18-21). These passages have too often been 'spiritualised' by Evangelicals in general and Pentecostals in particular, as referring to 'other worldly' concerns and needs. The text does not warrant such an exclusive interpretation. No wonder that J Deotis Roberts (1987:59), a more conservative and prominent spokesman for American Black Theology laments that 'the virtues of Pentecostalism are often negative and private. It is notoriously short on social conscience and social justice. Corporate sins are seldom recognised, and there is little concern for social transformation'.

Some years earlier, Roberts (1974:110) said something that is pertinent for our understanding of pneumatology in the South African context today: 'A powerless people being crushed by the ruthless abuse of power in a racist society needs a Christian understanding of God as power'. Unfortunately, so often a preoccupation with the Holy Spirit sometimes leads to an otherworldly 'spiritual' outlook that fails to integrate the understanding of the 'Spirit' with the holistic African world view, and subconsciously considers that the Holy Spirit is not really interested in matters regarded as 'politics'. This sometimes means (in South Africa at least) that 'spiritual' churches have lagged behind in their commitment to political and social change. MacRobert (1988:50) shows that, for Black Christians in the American holiness movement of the 19th Century, 'the experience of the Spirit was more than personal holiness, it was also power from God to triumph over injustice and oppression in the social sphere'. It is my belief that a new African perspective of pneumatology will rely firmly on the power of the Spirit and yet at the same time will not limit that working of the Spirit to 'spiritual' or 'personal' matters. It will realise that 'anything that affects our attainment of an abundant life and social freedom is on the Spirit's agenda' (Roberts 1987:61).

3.4 The New Testament and power in Africa

Luke (1:15, 17) describes John the Baptist as 'filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth' and that he would 'go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah'. Both his parents are 'filled with the Spirit' and give prophetic

utterance (1:41, 67). Similarly, Luke (2:25-27) says that 'the Holy Spirit was upon' Simeon, and that the Spirit revealed things to him and moved him. There is continuity here with the best Old Testament prophetic tradition and parallels in the African Spirit-type churches.

All four Gospel writers record the words of John the Baptist that Christ would 'baptize with the Holy Spirit'. Horton (1976:84), in characteristic Pentecostal style, says that this is 'a new thought not mentioned in the Old Testament. The Spirit is not only to be poured out on them; they are to be immersed in Him, saturated with Him'. Jesus Christ at his baptism is set apart by the Father for the ministry that he came to accomplish by the coming of the Spirit upon him as a dove (Matthew 3:16). He is then 'led by the Spirit' to be tempted (4:1). Luke (4:1, 14) records that Christ was also 'full of the Holy Spirit', and that after his temptation he returned to Galilee 'in the power of the Spirit'. Matthew (4:23) here adds the signs which authenticated the presence of the Spirit, including 'healing every disease and sickness among the people'. It is important that this emphasis on the healing of the whole person by Christ be realised. A person who is sick lacks power. The power of the Spirit is given so that all a person's needs, including powerlessness, can be met. This is also the emphasis of the African churches, showing that the Spirit is indeed present in the church.

It is clear that the Gospel writers meant to emphasise the fact that 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power' (Acts 10:38). The supernatural ministry of Christ through the Holy Spirit ('if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God') proved that the kingdom of God had come (Matthew 12:28). Comments Heron (1983:41), 'the power by which the evil spirits are compelled to submit is God's Spirit'. Wimber (1985:98) says that the miracles of Christ were 'a foreshadowing and promise of coming universal redemption and the fullness of the kingdom', and that together they demonstrated the reign of Christ over the four areas of demons, disease, nature and death. Comments Mbiti (1971:140):

In his ministry, Jesus makes constant encounters with unseen powers His healing of diseases and other infirmities, his casting out of the demons, and even his raising of the dead, are acts which constitute the eschatological overthrow of evil powers by the Messiah.

On the Day of Pentecost Peter was to proclaim that 'Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs' (Acts 2:22). The supernatural ministry of Christ, therefore, authenticated him as the Ser-

vant of Yahweh, the Messiah on whom the Spirit had come ‘without limit’ (John 3:34). Comments Taylor (1972:203) ‘There can be no doubt that the power of Jesus over sickness was regarded as a sign both of his Messiahship and of his possession by the Spirit of God’. The miracles of Christ were also devoid of the Western distinction between the salvation of the soul and salvation from illness; for several times the word to ‘save’ is used to refer to deliverance from physical sickness. It is this type of holistic salvation which is often proclaimed by the Spirit-type churches in Africa, and is the reason for their attraction. The power of the Spirit is to be demonstrated in Africa today by healings and deliverances from all evil affliction and oppression. One of the evidences that the Spirit had indeed come on the apostles was that ‘many wonders and miraculous signs were done’ by them (Acts 2:43).

In the book of Acts, the promise of the power of the Spirit by Christ before his ascension (1:5, 8) was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, when 120 disciples ‘were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them’ (2:1-4). This manifestation of the Spirit was of such a strange and unruly nature that some accused them of being drunk (2:13, 15). Peter has to counter this accusation by saying that it was the fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy, where the emphasis of the pouring out of the Spirit is the manifestation of revelations, especially prophecy (2:16-21). Jesus Christ had received the promised Holy Spirit and had ‘poured out what you now see and hear’ (2:33). The gift of the Spirit was now for ‘all whom the Lord our God will call’ (2:39). A visit to an African Spirit-type church service by an uninformed Western-oriented observer may have a similar effect as it had on the sceptics on the Day of Pentecost. The manifestations of the Spirit, the noise, the glossolalia, the prophesying, perhaps the dancing, the jumping, and even the music - all this will convince one that these people are not in complete control of their senses!

The Pauline Epistles also make an inseparable link between the Holy Spirit and ‘power’. Paul says that he has fully preached the gospel ‘by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit’ (Romans 15:19). Paul’s preaching in Corinth had been ‘not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power’ (1 Corinthians 2:4). Here the preaching of the gospel is to be accompanied by healings, exorcisms and other pneumatological manifestations. Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians (3:16) was that God ‘may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being’. This power of God for the believer was ‘at work within us’ (3:20). Paul also made a contrasting parallel between getting ‘drunk on wine’ and being continuously ‘filled with the Spirit’ (5:18), probably a reference to the ‘unruliness’ of the latter experience. Horton (1976:244) points out that this ‘is not a one-time experience, but a continued filling or (better) repeated fillings’.

Again, Paul referred to power as the distinctive and fundamental accompaniment of the Spirit in his first letter to the Thessalonians (1:4), when he says that 'our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit'. The working of the Holy Spirit in the Bible and in Africa is inextricably connected with the power of God.

Connected to the issue of biblical power concepts is the question of the pervasive awareness of a lack of power. All people everywhere have a need for power whenever they feel powerless, whenever their existential needs are unfulfilled. In African traditional religions, God as the ultimate cause of creation is seen (however vaguely) as the absolute source of all power. He provides enabling power, the force of being and existence that has its origins in him. This has great significance for African Christian concepts of the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's power is identified with the same force of being and existence that is the enabling power of God. The power of the Spirit enables the African to *become* all that God intended for one to become, a human being created in the image of God.

It is my conviction that this African concept of power is a *praeparatio evangelica*, a largely positive preparation for the message of the power of the Holy Spirit in Africa. The reason for the success and prevalence of the African diviners, even in urban Africa today, is because they are seen as 'powerful' and able to impart power to their afflicted and powerless clients. The longing and continual quest for power, and the preoccupation with the traditional spirit world is the African manifestation of a universal human need. People need to interact with other powers (especially God) in order to exist. This universal need for power is never fully satisfied in religious observances of any kind by themselves; and this applies equally to African religions. The people whose powerlessness remains, seek a power beyond and greater than that of the spirits, the diviners and the sorcerers - a dynamic, life-giving power that meets 'this-worldly' needs and responds fully to culturally-based religious aspirations. The message of receiving the power of the Spirit of God, the greatest power of all, is that which alone can satisfy these needs. The African quest for power thus becomes fertile ground for a Christian pneumatology that is incarnated in Africa. The omnipotence of God is revealed through the Holy Spirit.

4 THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE SPIRIT WORLD

4.1 The African spirit world in biblical perspective

In the fifth chapter we surveyed the African spirit world; this we now need to consider in biblical perspective. Heron (1983:4) observes that the Old Testa-

ment seldom conceives of 'spirits' as 'quasi-personal entities'. Nevertheless, there was much in the Old Testament that bore eloquent witness to a profound holism similar to that of Africa. Kelsey (1972:57-58) writes, 'the dreams and visions, God's speaking in the human heart, the healings, the prophetic messages all speak of a spiritual world in touch with a physical one'. Taylor (1972:67-68), pointing to the similarities between traditional divination in Africa and the 'trance and dance' used by the early Israelite prophets says that 'there is every reason to believe that their methods of receiving insight were the same'. Ndiokwere (1981:251) shows that a legitimate type of 'divination' was a 'recognized function of the prophet in Israel'.

In the New Testament world, as in Africa, personal spirits (both malevolent and benevolent) abound. Jesus came into the world with a clear acceptance of the reality of the spirit world. He believed in 'a variety of spiritual beings which had a direct effect upon men and could be directly experienced by one with sufficient perception' (Kelsey 1981:175). His authority is immediately evidenced by the fact that 'unclean spirits' obey him (Mark 1:27). Exorcism and healing are 'the two major charismatic activities' of Christ (Montague 1976:244). In his encounter with demons, these evil spirits acknowledge his superior power, the power of the Spirit (Mark 1:24; 5:7).

There is much teaching on the spirit world in the epistles of Paul. 'More than any other writer of the New Testament,' notes Mbiti (1971:142) 'it is Paul who repeatedly speaks about spirit beings of a wide variety'. And Kelsey (1981:177) says that it is 'nearly impossible to understand Paul's message if one excises from it the belief in the spiritual world and its interaction with men'. Most of the biblical references to the spirit world are more easily grasped in an African context than in a Western one, for obvious reasons.

There are certain fundamental issues raised by biblical manifestations of the Spirit, particularly with respect to the allegations by Western analysts of the continuity between traditional spirit possession and the manifestations of receiving the Spirit in African churches. Many of these allegations are founded on Western presuppositions which have no biblical basis and little or no relevance in Africa. These manifestations are not necessarily 'pagan' because they are peculiarly African. Does not the Holy Spirit have the sovereign right to give African expression to his presence, no matter how strange it may seem to Western observers? Kelsey (1972:58) notes that in the different manifestations of the Spirit 'the spiritual world had broken through into the lives of ordinary men'. It is this breaking through by the Holy Spirit into the spirit world of Africa that constitutes much of the attraction of the Spirit-type churches.

4.2 Traditional divination and prophetic therapy

The traditional African supreme being is largely conceived as an unpredictable and unknowable God. This brings with it a host of unresolved questions, and has in part contributed to the preponderant beliefs in the spirit world, especially in the ancestors. They are seen as the cause of both good and evil. They also prove to be somewhat unreliable and unpredictable. When trouble or affliction strikes, the paramount questions in the mind of Africa are *who* has caused the problem, and what must be *done* to rectify the fault. The diviner has the traditional answers to these questions, which invariably involve the performance of some ritual act aimed at placating an offended ancestor.

In keeping with the holistic world view, the whole of the African environment is given religious meaning. Too often theologians, including African theologians, have downplayed the importance of the spirit world - not so the African Spirit-type churches. They have provided in the person of the prophet a very real, and an ostensibly biblical solution to the questions relating to Africa's concrete physical needs and the persistence of affliction.

There is indeed a parallel between the diviner and the prophet; but the similarities are precisely because both are seeking to provide answers to the same questions. Both will diagnose the source of the affliction as being 'the interference of spirits (ancestral, vengeful or alien spirits), evil powers or wizardry' (Daneel 1983:87) - although the Christian prophet today will also often ascribe the affliction to Satan, who is another 'alien spirit'. In combatting evil forces both will seek to neutralise the harmful use of magic (Daneel 1983:89). Radical differences emerge in the solutions offered to these problems. Whereas the diviner points to a maintenance of the traditional ancestor cult, the prophet's solution is usually aimed at confronting traditional beliefs and providing an acceptable alternative that will facilitate a deepening of the people's Christian commitment. 'The prophetic therapy', notes Daneel (1974:228) 'is based on the belief of the power of the Christian God, which surpasses all other powers'. The source of God's power is found in the Holy Spirit. Prayer and speaking in tongues during prophetic consultations 'serve to establish the presence of the Holy Spirit' (Daneel 1983:87). Instead of traditional rituals and medicines, the prophet will use the laying on of hands, exorcism, and ritual objects which are 'symbolic representations of the healing power of the Christian God' (Daneel 1983:88). Some of the biblical prophets were consulted by people in much the same manner as African prophets are today. And yet these same prophets, Israelite and African, would uncom-

promisingly reject any 'illegitimate' divination such as that practised by the traditional diviner. The sources of their 'revelation' are not the same, even when their methods are similar; and in fact the two different sources are diametrically opposed to each other.

4.3 Continuity or discontinuity?

The continuity-discontinuity debate will rage on. This study comes across as a largely positive appraisal of the Spirit-type churches; and so it is. My lack of empirical research in some of the 'churches of the Spirit' with whom I am relatively unacquainted has resulted in my hesitation to accept what seem to me to be unconvincing arguments of continuity. I accept that my preliminary conclusions of discontinuity may indeed be too superficial. As Daneel (1983:88) has observed, there are times when there is a danger of a magical interpretation being given to prophetic therapy, particularly in the use of ritual symbolic objects; and there are times when the 'power' of the prophets leads to an over-dependence on them. It may also sometimes seem as if Christ has been relegated to the background in the overemphasis on the power of the Spirit.

Nevertheless, the fact that so many of the manifestations of the Spirit encountered in the Spirit-type churches have parallels in traditional religion should not unduly alarm us. When a traditional medium is possessed by a spirit there are often accompaniments such as the working up into a trance-like state through repetitive singing, clapping, dancing and drumming (also sometimes accompanied by beer-drinking). There may even be 'speaking in tongues'; although I have yet to be convinced that such a phenomenon exists in this context. As far as I am aware, the possessing spirit always brings a message in clear, understandable language. Many of these outward forms are also found in the 'receiving of the Spirit' in the African churches and, indeed in Western Pentecostalism. The African character of these expressions of the Spirit has been traced back to Afro-American religious practices, which have now become acceptable to a greater or lesser degree throughout the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. The Holy Spirit has sanctified for his use religious expressions which are found in traditional Africa!

If we grant that there may often be spurious and even counterfeit manifestations of the 'Spirit', we must never forget to distinguish between the outward *form* and the inward *content*, and to view these phenomena from the point of view of the participants. Even though there are similarities in the form of these manifestations, a distinction is usually made in their content (and especially in their intent) by the African Christians themselves. The content is

believed to be completely different, pointing to a confrontation with the old practices rather than to a continuation of them. This is the view of many Spirit-type churches; and is certainly the predominant view of African Pentecostals. I have interviewed several black Pentecostal Christians on this issue; the unanimous view was that the ancestor cult was to be uncompromisingly rejected. To participate in ancestor rituals was to invite the oppression of demons. 'Ancestors' were not in fact believed to be ancestors at all. One informant told me that he believed that they were demon spirits impersonating the ancestors.

In contrast, the prevalence of the ancestor cult in the personal lives of members of the historic 'mission churches' and in some independent churches (particularly in Ethiopian-type churches) would seem to suggest that the view here is that there exists no real conflict between this and Christian beliefs. The ancestor rituals are an exclusively African (and personal) affair which can legitimately exist side by side with Christianity. They belong to two different worlds; and yet they can also be reconciled. This is clearly the opinion of several African theologians; and it also explains their numerous attempts to accommodate the ancestor cult within the orbits of Christology. One wonders whether this has not side-stepped the issue. It has not really entered into the necessary dialogue that ensues when two contrasting beliefs interact; and in fact it has substituted a dualism all of its own.

In the practices of the Spirit-type churches, investigators have not established the parallels and the alleged 'confusion' between the ancestors and the Holy Spirit. Whether the functions of the ancestors have been taken over by the Holy Spirit is a moot point, which cannot be conclusively proven. In this respect Western analysts need to acknowledge that their presuppositions may have clouded their ability to evaluate objectively; and that the African Spirit-type churches need to be given the benefit of the doubt. The point is, however, that if the ancestors are no longer an acceptable solution for the existential needs of African Christians, then it does not follow that these needs no longer exist. We must, therefore, welcome any attempt by African Christians to find solutions to these real African problems, and admit that very often the causes of sickness and other afflictions are dealt with more substantially in the Spirit-type churches than they are in any 'mission church' context.

The confrontation between the traditional African spirit world and the Holy Spirit in the Spirit-type churches incisively penetrates the African world view and makes Christianity relevant in the African idiom. African expressions of the Holy Spirit must be interpreted in the light of the biblical revelation, the African spirit world, and universal Christian experiences of the Spirit. Martin

(1975:55-56) comments on the conclusion of the Belgian official 'that Simon Kimbangu was not quite in possession of his senses' by pointing to the same accusation made by Jews in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. She goes on to say:

We twentieth-century Europeans may think the same of a Pentecostal service in Africa or services in one of the many Zionist services in South Africa in which, at a certain point, the whole congregation joins in prayer leading to ecstasy. The question is simply whether we can apply here our sober Western standards. If we do, then what are we going to do with the Old Testament prophets like Samuel, or with Elisha who used music to put himself into a trance, or with Ezekiel and his apparently pathological conditions? What are we going to do with Paul who was caught up into the third heaven and also spoke in tongues?

The power of the Holy Spirit liberates from the oppression of both the traditional spirit world, and Western 'colonial' forms of Christianity. I would venture to maintain that this dynamic African pneumatology meets human needs far more substantially than does either Western Christianity or African traditional religions. At the same time, African 'enthusiastic' Christianity such as is found in the Spirit-type churches, like the world-wide Pentecostal movement (which is becoming increasingly a 'Third World' phenomenon), witnesses to the fact that 'Christian life is life in the Spirit, and ought by its very nature to display manifest signs of its transforming and invigorating energy' (Heron 1983:131). Daneel (1983:59-60) has the final word:

It is the enactment of the Gospel in day to day living, the translation of the message of liberation in the concrete, visible and physical activities of people in those fields of human experience that really matter, which constitutes credibility and inspires conviction.

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**Selected Subject Index
and
Glossary**

- Abraham (biblical) 105
African, terminology 10-11
African Apostolic Church 44, 55
African Gospel Church 3
African independent churches,
types 1, 2, 4, 27-29, 49, 100
African Theology 5-6, 19-25, 33-
34, 78, 101, 122, 124
African traditional religion 4, 10-
19, 64-65, 69, 74-85, 101, 120,
122-123
Akan (Ghanaian people) 25, 89
Aladura (West African spiritual
churches) 35, 38, 46, 52, 55, 57,
90, 97, 104
Alien spirit 76
Amajeriko Church (people of
Jericho) 43
American Blacks 6, 26-27, 31, 47,
103, 117, 123
American Pentecostalism *see* Pen-
tecost
Ancestors, shades, living-dead vi-
vii, 7, 10, 13, 15, 16, 21, 67, 74-
75, 122
Ancestor veneration, worship 12,
67, 79-85, 87-89, 124
Ancestors and the Holy Spirit 10,
15, 85-98, 124
Ancestor possession 83-85
Andersson, Efraim (anthropolo-
gist) 35-36, 58, 70-71, 89, 93, 95
Animism 11-12, 59, 71, 93
Apostles 94-95
Apostolic 26-28, 87, 96
Apostolic Faith Mission 27-28, 40
Assemblies of God 3, 41
Azusa Street Revival (Los Ange-
les) 26, 46-47
Balaam (biblical) 106
Bantu, Bantu languages, Bantu-
speaking peoples 11, 15, 16, 76,
78, 81
Baptism, immersion 26-28, 38, 41,
55-56, 118
Baptism in the Spirit *see* Receiv-
ing the Spirit
Beyerhaus, Peter (German
theologian) 58-59, 64, 86
Bhengu, Nicholas (leader in
Assemblies of God move-
ment) 3, 41
Bible, biblical 5, 6-7, 9, 11, 15, 17,
24, 37, 59, 69, 100-101, 104-125
Biko, Steve (South African Black
Consciousness leader) 62
Black consciousness 62
Black Theology 19-20, 22-23, 24,
62, 90, 117
Boesak, Allan (South African
Black Theologian) 22, 62
Buthelezi, Manas (South African
Black Theologian) 22
Charismatic, Charismatic Move-
ment, Charismatic Churches
vii, 1-2, 49, 98, 102, 105, 123
Cherubim and Seraphim Society
46, 51
Christ, Christology 36, 59, 70, 86,
97, 100, 104, 123, 124
Church of the Lord 35, 45-46 *see*
also Aladura
Communion, Holy 55-56
Communion of the Saints 21
Cone, James (pioneer in Ameri-
can Black Theology) 22-23
Dance 43, 84, 105, 118, 120, 122
Daneel, Inus (M L) (missiologist)
vi-viii, 2, 3, 19, 20, 29-32, 36,
50, 55-56, 72, 76, 78, 83-84, 86-
87, 89, 90, 94-98
Daniel (biblical) 105
David (biblical) 116
Deus otiosus (Latin: withdrawn
god) *see* Supreme being
Dinka (Sudanese people) 16

- Divination, diviner 15, 54-55, 60, 67, 77-79, 95, 120, 121-123
- Dowie, John Alexander (leader of Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, America) 26, 28, 40
- Dreams 42, 80, 96, 121
- Dualism 4, 66, 101, 102, 117
- Dunamis (Greek: power) 63, 115
see also Power
- Dynamism 12-13, 15, 60
- Elijah (Biblical) 106-107
- Elisha (Biblical) 106-107, 125
- Ethiopian-type churches 3, 88, 124
- Evangelical vii, 62, 71, 105, 112, 117
- Evil, concepts of, causes of 14, 15, 30, 56, 60, 63, 65-70, 80-81, 122
- Exorcism 30, 33, 90, 95, 118, 119, 121, 125
- Fatalism 14
- Gate-test (in Passover festival) 55-56
- Gifts of the Spirit 111-113, 116
- God, traditional concepts of *see* Supreme being
- Grace Bible Church 3
- Harrist Movement (West Africa) 29
- Healing 3, 21, 30, 31, 33, 41, 50, 52-55, 56-57, 95, 106-113, 118-119, 121
- Holism 4-5, 8, 18-19, 67, 75, 101-104, 111, 117, 119, 122
- Holy Spirit *see* Pneumatology and under subject headings
- Idlozi (Zulu: ancestor) 16, 17, 80, 86, 94
- Idowu, E Bolaji (Nigerian theologian) 12-14, 20, 24, 61-62, 65, 78
- Immersion *see* Baptism
- Isithunzi (Zulu: shadow, shade) 17, 86
- Ithongo (Zulu: ancestor) 16, 80
- Joel (Biblical) 107-108
- Joshua (Biblical) 115
- Khaki Movement (Central Africa) 45, 58, 71, 89, 93
- Kimbangu, Simon (founder of the movement which bears his name)
- Kimbanguism (in Zaïre and Central Africa) 29, 32, 35-36, 44-45, 72, 125
- Kongo (people in West Central Africa) 77
- Lake, John G (American pioneer Pentecostal missionary in South Africa) 26-27, 40-41
- Lekganyane, Engenas (founder of the Zion Christian Church) 28
- Le Roux, P L (South African Pentecostal pioneer) 26-28
- Life-force, vital force 10, 12, 16, 21, 58-65, 67-68, 77, 115 *see also* power
- Living-dead *see* Ancestors
- Liturgy (in Spirit-type churches) 33, 54
- Magic, concepts of vii, 10, 12, 13, 65-67, 106, 122, 123
- Maimela, Simon (Black Theologian) 30
- Manifestations (of the Spirit) vi, 6, 7, 9, 19, 27, 29, 34, 39, 39, 40-57, 70-71, 91, 101, 104-113, 119, 121, 123-124
- Manipulation (of power) 7, 65-67
- Maranke, Johane (founder of African Apostolic [Maranke] Church in Zimbabwe and Central Africa) 29, 32, 44, 55

- Martin, Marie-Louise (missionologist) 36-37, 59, 70-72, 89, 93, 125
- Mbiti, John S (Kenyan theologian) 12, 13-14, 18, 20, 24, 32, 61, 65-66, 75-78, 82-84
- Medicine 30, 55, 60, 68, 122
- Medium *see* Spirit-medium
- Messianic, Messianic Churches 2, 71, 93, 116-117
- Micah (Biblical) 107
- Moses (Biblical) 105-106, 115
- Moya, Umoya (Sotho and Nguni languages: wind, spirit, Spirit) 16-19, 34, 42, 58, 70, 86, 91, 101, 114
- Munkukusa Movement (Central Africa) 89
- Murray, Andrew (South African Dutch Reformed church leader) 40-41
- Musama Disco Christo Church (Ghana) 34, 49
- Music 33, 45, 106, 119
- Mutendi, Samuel (founder of the Zion Christian Church in Zimbabwe) 31
- Nature spirits 75-77
- Nazarite Church (Zulu church in South Africa) 88, 91-92
- Ndiokwere, N (Nigerian Catholic theologian) 34, 51
- Ngunza Movement (Central Africa) 35-36, 45, 49, 58, 70, 93
- Oosthuizen, Gerhardus C (South African missiologist) 4, 8, 19, 37, 48, 58-59, 71-72, 85-86, 91-93, 95-97
- Parham, Charles H (early American Pentecostal leader) 47, 103
- Passover (Easter) Festival 55-56
- Paul (Biblical) 108-113, 125
- Pauw, B A (South African anthropologist) 41-42, 49, 79, 89, 93
- Pedi (South African people) 17-18, 76, 78, 81, 82
- Pentecost, Pentecostal Movement, Pentecostal Church vi-vii, 1-3, 6, 26, 28-29, 40-41, 52, 70, 73, 90, 91, 93, 96-97, 103-104, 108-109, 112, 114, 117, 118, 123, 124
- Pentecostalism (American) 27, 29, 51
- Pentecostalism (Western) vi, 27, 34-35, 46-47, 49, 51, 52, 97-98, 103, 123
- Peter (Biblical) 107, 108
- Philip (Biblical) 108-109
- Pneuma (Greek: wind, breath, spirit) 113-114
- Pneumatology (doctrine of the Holy Spirit) vi-viii, 1-2, 5-7, 8-10, 14, 20-24, 25, 29-39, 57, 69, 70-73, 85-98, 100-125 *see also* under subject headings
- Pobee, John (Ghanaian theologian) 25
- Pondo (South African people) 76, 85
- Power, concepts of vi-vii, 4-7, 10, 11, 15-16, 58-73, 100, 113-120 *see also* Life-force
- Praeparatio evangelica (Latin: preparation for the gospel) vii, 120
- Prophecy, Prophet, Prophetic movements, practices vi, 2-3, 6, 8, 21, 30, 32, 41, 52-57, 70-72, 95, 105-113, 119, 122
- Prophets, Old Testament 104-108
- Receiving the Spirit 6, 27, 38, 40-47, 69, 96, 106, 108-110, 123

- Reformed Theology 26, 52, 105
Ritual killings *see* Sacrifices
Roberts, J Deotis (American Black Theologian) 62, 117
Ruach (Hebrew: wind, breath, spirit) 113-115
Sacrifices 81-82
Samson (Biblical) 115
Samuel (Biblical) 115, 125
Seriti (Sotho languages: dignity) 17-18
Setiloane, Gabriel (African Theologian in South Africa) 18, 20, 23-24
Seymour, William J (leader of the Azusa Street Pentecostal-revival) 26-27
Shades *see* Ancestors
Shembe, Isaiah (Zulu founder of the Nazarite Church) 88
Shona Churches vii, 30, 32, 38, 54-55, 72, 76, 79, 84, 89, 90, 94-98
Sorcerer, Sorcery 75 *see also* Wizard
Sotho (Southern African people) 24, 66, 81, 83, 88, 89, 94, 97
Soweto (South African Black city) 3, 43, 88, 96
Spirit-baptism *see* Receiving the Spirit
Spirit possession 27, 40-47, 69, 78-79, 96-98 *see also* Receiving the Spirit
Spirit world vii, 5, 12-13, 15, 20, 24, 25, 67-70, 74-98, 102, 120-125 *see also* Ancestors
Spirit-medium 78, 83-85, 123
Spirit-type churches 3, 5-7, 38, 52
 growth factors in 29-31
 leadership in 31-32
 pneumatology in 32-39
 Spirit manifestations in 40-57
concepts of power in 69-73
and the ancestors 85-98
see also under subject headings
Spiritism 12, 83
Spirituality (African) 4, 18-19, 101
Stephen (Biblical) 107
Sundkler, Bengt (missiologist) 26, 28, 34, 36, 42-43, 46, 47-48, 70-71, 85-86, 91-92
Supreme being, traditional concepts of 5, 12-14, 24, 65-70, 74, 80-82, 123
Swazi (Southern African people) 34, 38, 43, 50, 72, 88, 93
Tempels, Placide (Catholic missionary and anthropologist) 15, 18, 58, 61-62, 63-65
Terminology, typology (of independent churches) 2-3
Theism 12-14, 67, 74
Timothy (Biblical) 112-113
Turner, Harold W (missiologist) 35, 49, 52, 55
Tlhaping (Tswana people) 88-89, 93
Tongues, speaking in vi, 6, 26, 28, 34, 38, 40-51, 70, 96, 108-112, 122, 123
Trance 43, 54, 96, 121, 125
Tswana (Southern African people) 24, 42, 49, 75, 93
Twi (West African people) 16
Typology *see* Terminology
Umoya *see* Moya
Umphefumulo (Zulu: breath, soul) 17, 19
Venda (South African people) 83
Victory fellowship 3
Vital force, vital participation *see* Life-force
Wakkerstroom 26

- West, Martin (South African anthropologist) 39, 43, 88, 94
- Western Pentecostalism *see* Pentecost
- Witch 14, 60
- Witchcraft 13, 30, 56, 60, 63, 65-67
- Wizard, Wizardry 14, 30, 55, 60, 122
- World view 5, 9, 22, 64, 69, 85, 101
- Xhosa (South African people) 41, 79, 80, 89
- Zion Apostolic Church 28
- Zion Apostolic Faith Mission 28
- Zion Christian Church 28, 36-37
- Zion City 26
- Zionist Churches vii, 2, 3, 32-34, 38, 40-43, 46, 54-56, 70-72, 87-98, 125
- Zulu (South African people) 16-17, 42, 47-48, 66, 75, 79, 80, 82, 84-85, 88, 91-92



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