

CHAPTER 4

Salvation, healing and deliverance from evil

1 A HOLISTIC SALVATION

1.1 Salvation in Africa

Salvation in Africa needs to be related to more than a truncated concept of the 'salvation of the soul' and the life hereafter. It needs to be seen as holistic, oriented to the whole of life's problems as experienced by people. Salvation needs to be deliverance and protection from evil in all its forms, including evil spirits and sorcery, misfortune, natural disasters and disease. It is for this reason that South African theologian Simon Maimela (1985:71) remarked that for many Africans there was a prevalent belief 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 went on to observe that the greatest attraction of the African indigenous churches was that they gave an 'open invitation' to people 'to bring their fears and anxieties about witches, sorcerers, bad luck, poverty, illness and all kinds of misfortune to the church leadership' (:71). In the same way Inus Daneel, particularly in his second volume of *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches* (1974), demonstrated the predominance of factors that express this holistic approach to salvation in accounting for the appeal and rapid proliferation of these movements. The adaptations to traditional rituals and customs, prophetic practices which detect and remove malignant medicines and wizardry, and especially the role of healing and exorcism became the good news to Africa. The African Pentecostal churches proclaimed a message of deliverance from sickness and from the oppression of evil spirits, and the message of receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, which enabled people to survive in a predominantly hostile traditional spirit world. This was indeed an attractive religion that offered solutions to **all** of life's problems, and not just the 'spiritual' ones - it absorbed people's existence every day, and not just on Sundays.

For this reason, this chapter attempts to describe soteriology in African Pentecostalism, in terms not only of salvation from sinful acts and from eternal condemnation in the life hereafter (the salvation of the soul), but also of salvation from sickness (healing), from evil spirits (exorcism) and from other forms of misfortune. In this respect, the role the African prophets have to play, and the interaction with African traditional religion are extremely significant factors. The next two chapters, which deal with concepts of God and the emphasis on pneumatology in African Pentecostalism, continue this theme - because soteriology in these churches is fundamentally a pneumatological soteriology, as Daneel (1989b:165) has observed: 'The Spirit's manifestations in glossolalia, dreams, faith healing and prophecy are indicative of God's abiding presence, and therefore of salvation.' This holistic concept of soteriology will be followed here because this is precisely how African Pentecostalism understands salvation.

1.2 Salvation in Pentecostal churches

Most members of Pentecostal mission churches and independent Pentecostal churches have a very definite idea of what it means to be 'saved'. This particular understanding was held by virtually all the Pentecostals we interviewed, and there was remarkable uniformity in this respect. Salvation is usually viewed as the salvation of the individual soul from sin, Satan and hell. It comes to a person through faith in Christ and results in the forgiveness of sins. An AFM woman expressed this view clearly in our interview with her. Another member of the church had 'testified' to her (told her about her experience of Christ) and had invited her to the church. She was convinced of her need for salvation from her

sins through the preaching from the Bible, and she 'got saved' because she made a public acknowledgement of her faith in Christ. She went to the front of the church to give her life to Jesus Christ, and she 'became a child of God'. 'This was how I first experienced the joy of salvation,' she said. When asked how she knew she was 'saved', this respondent quoted numerous Bible verses expressing fundamental Pentecostal (and Evangelical) convictions. She said that salvation comes to a person who has believed with the heart in Jesus Christ, and has confessed him with the mouth. Through a conscious decision to 'receive Christ', and a confession of sin to God, a person is 'born again', resulting in forgiveness of sins and a clean heart. Such a person has become a 'new creation' in Christ. The foundation of this salvation is the work of Christ on the cross, which was a demonstration of the love and the grace of God, and which must be received by faith.

Other Pentecostal respondents expressed similar sentiments. Some did not have such a well-informed understanding of the Scriptures as the AFM woman had. But the message of salvation as described here is the most frequently preached topic in Pentecostal churches. Members are continually challenged with the need to respond to this message and 'accept Christ'; indeed, it is very difficult to remain in the church without having made this decision. It was for this reason that the views of Pentecostals on salvation were fairly uniformly consistent, compared with the rather more diverse views of Pentecostal-type church members. This fact is not intended to portray the latter in a less favourable light, but to describe accurately the findings of this particular research on the views of the members themselves.

Pentecostals consider that people are 'saved' when there is a change in their lifestyle. In Pentecostal evangelistic meetings people are encouraged to bring their cigarettes, their fighting sticks and knives, their traditional charms, their *muti* (traditional medicines), and even their church badges to the 'altar' to be burned or otherwise destroyed. This signifies a radical break with the past, that all things have become 'new'. The 'saved' are expected to separate themselves 'from old friends that deceive and mislead people', as one respondent put it. This Pentecostal said that salvation means that we are saved from sin, because our sins are forgiven. A 'saved' person has left behind 'the old things' and the old behaviour, and has become a new creation in Christ. She knew that she was 'saved' because she experienced God's power in her life.

Pentecostals have communicated their concept of salvation so often to other people that most people in the township also understand what it means in their terms. They have heard Pentecostals and other Evangelicals preaching on the buses and in the trains, in open-air services, in churches and at funerals. Most people from the Pentecostal mission churches and the independent Pentecostal

churches feel that ZCC and other Pentecostal-type church members need to be 'saved', and they do not refer to them as Christian brothers and sisters (*bazalwane*). The basis for this judgment seems to be that the 'personal decision' to 'receive Christ' has not in their perception been taken by members of these churches; this same judgment is usually applied to the members of 'mission churches' as well. In their view, the members of these churches are not 'saved' in terms of their own particular understanding of salvation.

1.3 Salvation in Pentecostal-type churches

Amongst many members of Pentecostal-type churches, the understanding of salvation is very similar to that which I have just described above. But some said that they were not 'saved' in the way that the *bazalwane* understood the word, as it was not taught in their church. Respondents nevertheless felt that they were going to heaven one day, because they were church members. Some said that they were 'saved' because they had stopped doing wrong things. The answers given by some members of indigenous Pentecostal-type churches to the questions on salvation were not unlike those given by the *bazalwane*. Sometimes their responses were virtually identical - like the St John minister who said that he knew he was saved because his life had changed and he was living a life pleasing to God. Sometimes the church had achieved a radical change in the lifestyle of the member. One respondent told us that he had been a gang member and a 'robber' when he was convicted of his sin, after speaking with a minister in St John. He left all the bad things he was doing and his old friends and joined the St John church. To him 'salvation' meant that he had been saved from these bad things. A member of St Matthew Apostolic Church likewise said that she was saved because she had left her old sins and changed her actions, after confessing this to God. She had been saved from 'worldly things', because somebody had 'witnessed to me about Jesus', she said. The main work that her church had to do was to testify about Jesus, the Saviour and the Healer, she said. A ZCC member said he knew he was saved because he attended church. When he encountered any problems he would kneel down and pray, and his problems were solved. But he also said that he was saved because he had received Christ, and was happy. A bishop's wife said that salvation meant that you avoided sinful things 'like going to discos'. A prominent ZCC member said he was saved because he now had faith deep within him.

In other cases there was a clear difference from the concept of salvation reflected above. Some respondents said that although the *bazalwane* said that they were saved, they still practised sinful things - and therefore they did not understand what they were saved from. They indicated that *bazalwane*, as much as anyone else, still told lies, got angry, and were selfish, proud and jealous of others. Therefore they could not say that they were saved from sin.

Some Pentecostal-type church members equated salvation with baptism by immersion. A member of the Christian Church in Zion, for example, said that when a person went down into the water that person automatically received Christ, the life changed, and the person was 'born again'. This view was also expressed by some members of Pentecostal churches, and it does not indicate that it is the general teaching of the churches on baptism. The view is reminiscent of the Roman Catholic doctrine of baptismal regeneration, the only real difference lying in the quantity of water used.

Several people reacted to the question on the meaning of salvation by saying that it was not possible to know who was 'saved' until the 'end', that is after death, or at the judgement or at Jesus Christ's return. We should therefore not judge one another 'as some people do', said one woman - a reference to the rather assertive evangelism practices of some Pentecostals. Respondents usually said that people can know that they are saved only when they die. It lies in God's hands who will be saved; people cannot say that they are saved in this life, for they are all sinners while alive. This view may have had something to do with the fact that, for some church members, salvation was often seen in terms of a reward in the hereafter for good works done in this life. One woman said that it was not possible to be saved from sins, because we could not escape the fact of ongoing sin throughout life. This 'salvation' would therefore be from out of the world at the end of life as we now experience it, she said. Another likened salvation to a game of football - you could not know who was going to win until the final whistle! A member of St John said that to be saved was to be 'one hundred percent holy'; he was therefore not yet 'saved'. One Pentecostal-type respondent even went so far as to say that people who said that salvation was possible in this life were false prophets and false teachers, as the Bible said! Another said that people who claimed to be saved were proud, and therefore would not go to heaven.

The above views both differed from and criticised the views of members of Pentecostal churches, who seemed to be sure that they were 'saved' in this life. Nevertheless, the predominant idea on the subject of salvation in the minds of most Pentecostal-type church members was that they were 'saved' because they had left 'sinful things', were baptised and were attending church. ZCC members see salvation in terms of being the possession of a baptised member in the church who keeps the church rules. One ZCC respondent said that he was saved because he did good things and avoided doing wrong.

IPC members believe that they are 'saved' because they are in the church, because they obey the instructions of Father Modise, and because they read and obey the Bible. Several members of the IPC said that they were saved from doing things that displeased God, like drinking, sexual immorality, gambling and

smoking. The church members are the 'chosen flock' of God who attend church regularly, and are therefore bound for Heaven. One member of the IPC said that he had been saved from death. He told us how he had been thrown from a moving train in 1986 and had not died. Two others had died instantly. 'There I saw God's salvation,' he said, 'and I joined the IPC.' Another member said that IPC members were not 'saved', but they were 'chosen'. They were the 'called ones' who had joined the IPC because of difficulties, problems and sicknesses. These difficulties were in fact proof that they had been 'chosen' by God (or by Modise). After a person had been helped by Modise it was very important to obey implicitly the instructions he gave every new member. She said that IPC children would not get sick as long as their parents were 'following the laws of Modise'. My impression is that IPC members, like members of several other indigenous churches, understand the means of salvation in terms of what one should or should not do; they understand salvation itself primarily (but not exclusively) in terms of freedom from sickness, poverty and other 'this worldly' problems. At the same time they have not altogether forfeited the futuristic idea of salvation in terms of eternal life in heaven yet to come.

1.4 Different emphases

There are some differences between the views of salvation between Pentecostals on the one hand and some members of Pentecostal-type churches on the other. These differences, however, probably stemmed from different emphases in these churches rather than from a differing theology. Pentecostals have been influenced by Western evangelism and Evangelical theology far more heavily than have indigenous church members, mainly through their trained ministers who had attended firstly Evangelical and (more recently) Pentecostal Bible Colleges and theological institutions. Their preachers see the message of the salvation of the soul from sin as being the most important theme of their preaching, demanding a response of repentance and faith in Christ from every individual who hears this message every Sunday (and during the week as well). Because of this most Pentecostals have a fairly uniform, 'spiritual' view of salvation which, although assenting to the all-embracing holistic salvation revealed in the Scriptures, in fact concentrates on the salvation of the soul. Salvation in the sense of God's wellbeing in every part of life, encompassing deliverance from all evil powers including sickness, does not receive the emphasis it used to receive in the beginning of pentecostalism, and which is still emphasised in many indigenous churches.

I do not wish to create the impression that all Pentecostals have 'right' concepts of salvation while those of the members of indigenous Pentecostal-type churches are 'wrong'. There were Pentecostals whose concept of salvation did not differ

perceptibly from that of most Pentecostal-type church members, and there were several Pentecostal-type church members whose view of salvation was identical to that of most Pentecostals. Nevertheless, there was probably a difference in emphasis between these two groups. Whereas Pentecostals generally saw salvation as being primarily the salvation of the soul from sin, members of Pentecostal-type churches saw salvation in more inclusive terms. This was not always theorised about as much as it was practised; for this reason these members found it more difficult to answer questions which had inherent presuppositions based on Western Evangelical theology. Salvation for them has to do with the whole of church life, as it is experienced in baptism, prophetic practices, healing, deliverance from evil, and also in obeying the rules of the church. Daneel (1989b:165) points out that salvation is healing, and this salvation is holistic in the indigenous churches. It 'comprehends the whole of life and recognises no artificial distinction between body and soul'. The indigenous churches have attempted to reckon more adequately with Africa's holistic world in their concept of salvation. In doing so, some of them may have missed a dimension of salvation which the Pentecostals proclaim so loudly. The Pentecostals, on the other hand, may not be answering many African questions if their emphasis is salvation in a 'spiritual' sense only.

2 HEALING METHODS

2.1 'Faith healing' and 'divine healing'

There is no doubt that healing from illness plays a major role in the life of African Pentecostals of every type. Prophets, ministers, bishops, pastors, evangelists and other church healers play a leading part in this. Healing is one of the reasons why people join these churches, and in several cases it was found to be the main reason. It forms a prominent part of the liturgy of these churches every week, and one can hardly visit a Pentecostal or Pentecostal-type church without observing this emphasis, and the rituals associated with it. In the ZCC, for example, one of the main features of everyday ZCC life is the belief in what Lukhaimane (1980:62) calls 'faith healing', which he defines as the use of 'sanctified papers, *khutane* (blue cloths on clothes), copper wires, strings which people had to use as protectives or healing instruments. In faith healing people therefore had faith in these "tools" and not in God directly.' 'Divine healing', which he defines as healing through the laying on of hands is 'the ordinary healing method which is common in all the Zionist or Pentecostal churches' (:63-64). This has a scriptural precedent (Mark 16:17-18), but it was apparently discontinued on the instructions of Engenas Lekganyane in 1930, 'because it was found to be dangerous on the part of the Church' (:65). Lukhaimane suggests that Lekganyane did not want his ministers to have power to heal by themselves,

without relying on himself as the source of this power. This proscription seems to have been relaxed in the ZCC in recent years. The laying on of hands, with (sometimes) the anointing with oil is the usual method practised in Pentecostal churches today, and Lukhaimane calls this 'divine healing'.

This distinction between 'faith healing' and 'divine healing' by Lukhaimane (himself a member of the St Engenas ZCC) is unconvincing. It is unlikely that the use or non-use of symbols affects the quality of the healing being procured, certainly not in the minds of the people involved in the healing practices. Both Pentecostals who do not appear to use symbols and those (mainly members of indigenous churches) who do are unanimous in their affirmation that it is God who ultimately heals, and that without faith in God the symbol is useless. For this reason I have not attempted to distinguish between 'faith healing' and 'divine healing' as Lukhaimane has done. In any case, the 'laying on of hands' or the anointing with oil - regarded by most Pentecostals as legitimate and scriptural healing practices - are most probably themselves as much symbols as is the use of water, a staff or burning paper.

The methods of healing, however, do constitute a major departure by the ZCC and other Pentecostal-type indigenous churches from the practices of Pentecostal churches; in fact, this could be seen as one of *the* main differences between them. Most members of Pentecostal mission and independent churches say that symbolic objects are unnecessary, because the power to heal is from God alone. A member of an independent Pentecostal church said that he used to suffer from high blood pressure. His father was a member of an indigenous Apostolic church, and the church healers used ropes and blessed water to try to help him. 'But these things did not help me at all,' he said. 'Only after I was saved and I had given my life to Jesus Christ was the problem of high blood pressure gone.'

The subject of healing produced a variety of absorbing responses in the interviews. Most of the members of Pentecostal and Pentecostal-type churches could tell of a time when they or members of their family were healed. It was rather interesting to see how often people would consult medical practitioners, and for what. In the case of indigenous church members a distinction was often made between sickness that was regarded as needing a Western medical specialist, and that which required a more 'African' solution, such as a visit either to a prophet or a diviner. Sometimes the prophet was visited rather than the diviner, simply because he was seen as being more powerful, and not because there was any inherent difference. Some of our respondents said that a medical doctor was needed when bones were broken and there was clearly something physically wrong. It was then not right to go to the prophet or the diviner, who seemed to be more effective for unseen, internal maladies.

2.2 Healing in Pentecostal churches

In Pentecostal mission and independent churches, healing by the use of symbolic objects is not usually found. Healing entailing the laying on of hands with prayer for the sick, however, usually takes place every Sunday. All African Pentecostals in the early years of this century used to be opposed to the use of medical doctors and their medicine; this position has significantly changed today, so that people are free to consult medical practitioners when necessary, especially when obvious physical disorders were encountered. One respondent felt that for 'everyday complaints' such as coughs, headaches and stomachaches the remedy was to pray for oneself or request the church leaders to pray by laying on hands. The result would be healing. In almost every one of the hundreds of Pentecostal services I have attended in the townships over the past twenty years, a 'prayer line' is held, usually at the end of the service, to pray for the sick through the laying on of hands. I have myself participated in these rituals many times, and have seen some sick people being helped in this way. Some have evidenced immediate release from painful symptoms; others have told later of how their healing began at that time. Some Pentecostal churches allow a time for the giving of 'testimonies' by the people who are healed in the 'prayer lines', either immediately after they are prayed for, or in a following Sunday service. Pentecostal people do not place as great an emphasis on prayer by a specially designated 'healer' or leader as is found in indigenous churches. One AFM member said that when someone in her family is sick she will usually pray for the sick person herself, or in more serious cases call other Christians to come and pray. If the sickness persists, she will consult a medical practitioner. Another member of an independent church told of how she was healed from a serious heart disorder which a medical practitioner had said needed surgery. She asked fellow members in the church to fast and pray with her for a week. When the symptoms returned three to four weeks later, she said that she 'became angry at the devil' and had to take a 'step of faith'. She stopped taking her high blood pressure tablets that day. The next morning two Christians came to her with a message from God; 'Go and tell her that I have completely healed her.' She has not taken tablets since that time. She is careful to point out that her opposition to medicine is a personal attitude which she does not expect from other Christians.

2.3 Healing in the IPC

The leader of the IPC, Frederick Modise, also practises healing the sick without using any symbolic objects such as those found in other Pentecostal-type churches. These things he describes as 'idols', which he was told to throw away at his 'conversion' on 3 October 1962. This is the most noticeable departure

from the practice of most indigenous Pentecostal-type churches. It seems, however, that IPC members were not as clear on these things as Modise himself, for half of the 42 members interviewed in Soshanguve said that IPC members used these symbolic objects. Before Modise will heal people they must first confess their sins to him - evidence of the widespread belief in Pentecostal and Pentecostal-type churches of the relationship between sickness and sin. Modise does not 'lay hands' on the sick. Several members alluded to the fact that Modise heals 'only by the words that he speaks'. One member said that 'Only the word of Jesus Christ can heal you. You must listen to *Moemedi* who preaches the word.' This listening to Modise is so important that ushers at Silo go up and down the aisles waking up any hapless person who has fallen asleep in the early hours of the morning. This emphasis on healing by 'the Word' (meaning the word of Modise) was mentioned by many members as well as by Modise himself in his preaching. His healing method consists of giving instructions to the afflicted, which if obeyed are believed to bring certain relief. In fact, he sometimes does not even speak to those who come to him for healing. One member of the IPC considered that Modise's healing methods proved that he was the *Moemedi* (representative, or advocate) of God. There also seems to be some opposition in the IPC to the use of medical science. One member said that it was necessary to obtain the permission of the church leaders before consulting a medical doctor, because 'going to the doctors is despising God's Word'.

Samuel Otwang attended the weekend celebration at Silo during March 1992. He lined up with over two thousand visitors outside the huge auditorium on Saturday night to be 'healed' by Modise. These people had had to throw away their 'fetishes' onto tables set out in the basement before coming to the door - cigarettes, alcohol, traditional charms used for healing and protection, necklaces, strings and ropes and other symbolic healing objects used by Zionists and Apostolics, including plastic water containers. They had been given numbers before the services and were to queue in that order. About fifteen were taken through the doors at a time. They were first subjected to a body search by a man at the door. Anyone found to have 'fetishes' was not admitted and was told to wait outside and return the following month when the objects had been thrown away. Eventually Sam was admitted into the auditorium. After he had ascended the platform he was told to turn around and walk backwards towards the table at which Modise sat. Then he was suddenly swung around by the assistant to face Modise, and was told to confess his sins. Sam, being a committed Christian, did not have any to confess, but he thought that 'unbelief' would be appropriate. This, however, did not satisfy the assistant, who said that Sam must confess 'adultery'. No, said Sam, he had only one wife and had never committed adultery, and so he offered 'lies'. The assistant persisted: 'If you want our Father to help you, you must confess your adultery.' This exchange

went on for some time, and Sam felt the pressure mounting. All the time he was looking at Modise, who was staring at the file in front of him without saying a word, maintaining an air of mysticism and aloofness. In order to extricate himself from this embarrassing situation, he reluctantly agreed: '*Go joalo*' ('It is so'). He had to then say to Modise: 'Forgive the sins I have done.' The assistant ushered him off the stage with the warning: 'You must leave adultery.' It appears that the confession of sins to Modise, and faith in his power to heal and in the words that he utters, are the prerequisites for healing and salvation in the IPC. I will comment further on the implications of the coercive nature of this encounter at the end of this chapter.

2.4 Healing and symbolism in indigenous churches

We have seen that one of the main differences between Pentecostal and most indigenous Pentecostal-type churches is the use of symbolic objects in healing. Many Pentecostals reject their use as unscriptural and smacking of a return to the heathen past. The symbolic objects are seen to resemble traditional charms given by diviners to ward off trouble. For this reason, a person who joins these churches from the indigenous Pentecostal-type churches is often expected to destroy these symbols, usually by burning them. Even badges of the churches are to be destroyed in this way. To Pentecostals it is sufficient for a believer to 'lay hands' on the sick in faith, trusting Christ's promise that the sick will then recover (Mark 16:19).

Nevertheless, for members in most indigenous churches the use of these symbols is one of the central and most important features of their church life. As Daneel (1974:232) has pointed out, these symbols do 'show direct parallels' with traditional healing methods. The all-important difference, however, lies in the fact that the diviners' medicines 'contain an inherent magical efficacy' whereas the symbols of the indigenous churches are just that, 'symbols ... representing the healing power of God' (Daneel 1974:338). The most common symbol used in these churches is that of water, which is 'blessed' or prayed for by a bishop or a prophet for use by the congregants, either as a healing potion itself or else in large quantities to induce vomiting, and sometimes mixed with ash. It is only the prayer which makes the water efficacious. As in traditional healing methods, a patient must expel the 'death' that is in the stomach to be healed. The vomiting is believed to get rid not only of physical sickness but also of spiritual defilement (Sundkler 1961:212). The water is seen to represent cleansing and purification from evil, sin, sickness and ritual pollution, concepts carried over from traditional thought. Sometimes the place from where the water is drawn is also important; as in baptisms, in some churches the water must be 'living (running) water'. This belief in holy water is prominent in almost all indigenous Pentecostal-type

churches, one notable exception being the IPC. A member of the St Matthew Apostolic Church also said that she did not believe in symbolic objects in healing. She said that 'God's power heals through the laying on of hands.'

In the ZCC the use of 'holy water' is one of the central practices in the church. Members receive water which has been prayed over by a minister or prophet. This water is then taken home and sprinkled as a ritual of purification or protection, or it is drunk or washed in for healing purposes. The water may be sprinkled on people, cars (it is even put into the radiators of cars for protection), houses, school books, food, and a variety of other objects. The use of this water is given biblical justification by referring to God's promise to cleanse his people from all their impurities by the sprinkling of clean water (Ezekiel 36:25), to the practice in the Torah of sprinkling water on a person polluted by contact with a corpse (Numbers 19:11-12) and by the Spirit of God 'hovering' over the waters (Genesis 1:1). It is therefore believed that the Holy Spirit is present with the water that has been blessed, or with the river of baptism (Dzivhani 1992:16). In some indigenous churches, particularly those of the 'Apostolic' type, water is the only symbol used. Sometimes this water is kept in the church buildings for use in healing rituals. Sometimes it is the water of the 'Jordan' used for baptisms that is believed to have this healing power. One woman, a member of an Apostolic church, told us how her young daughter had been sick for two years. She had been taken to hospitals, to medical doctors and to diviners, all to no avail. Finally she went to a Zionist prophet, who prayed for the little girl and gave her water. She was thereafter healed. 'I believe in the God of this water,' her mother exclaimed.

The use of water is especially prominent in the Saint John Apostolic Faith Mission, where it appears to be the main healing symbol used. Sundkler (1976:219-223) spoke of a local Swazi prophet in this church, Alphaeus Msibi, who began work in Swaziland in 1951. He made a very clear distinction between his church, which is Apostolic, and Zionists, 'who have no sense'. He established a church colony in rural Swaziland called Bethesda, a building with five doors 'as a real Bethesda should have' (:221). He considered this to be a hospital rather than a church, and people came to him in order for their sicknesses to be diagnosed. Patients were given special food prescribed by the healer and water mixed with ashes. An altar outside the church building was used to sacrifice cattle, from which ashes were extracted. Cases of sexual impurity were treated with the same water mixed with ashes and Sunlight soap. The prophet prayed for people by the laying on of hands and the smearing of their heads with ashes and soap. (There is a church in Soshanguve called the Sunlight Apostolic Church - whether there is any connection with the practice of using Sunlight soap in purification rituals is uncertain.)

Sundkler (:221) says that the emphasis in St John is on the purifying effect of water. This means that the use of water that has been blessed by the Bishop or another church leader is very important. Vast numbers of bottles and other containers filled with holy water are taken home from the annual conferences, and the use of such water becomes a prominent part of the activities in the outlying branches of the church. Msibi actually preached at his church that God Himself was in the holy water (:222).

Another symbol common to indigenous Pentecostal-type churches is the use of ropes and strings which are tied in various places on the body to procure healing and ward off evil. A member of the Saviour Apostolic Church was wearing strings on her wrists when we interviewed her. She explained that she suffered from pains in her wrists, and that a prophet had prayed for these cords which she was using, although she still had pain. These ropes also have traditional significance, and are sometimes linked with the ancestors. A ZCC member in Soshanguve said that the ropes are of different colours revealed by the ancestors to a prophet. When approached by a sick person, the prophet will be shown in a dream 'by the ancestors or God' which particular colour of rope this person must buy. The prophet then tells the sufferer the colour and prays over the ropes. The person must thereafter bind the ropes in the places where the pain is experienced most, and in this way it is believed that healing is received. One woman told us how she had suffered from painful legs. She went to the prophets who prayed for water, put her feet in this water, and fastened ropes on her legs. They also rubbed her legs with methylated spirits - an interesting Western intrusion! After some time she reported that she was healed. Another respondent, a healer in the Apostolic Church in Zion, used ropes as the main method for healing the sick. She gave this explanation:

These ropes can heal someone who is sick. When someone comes to me [for healing] I usually lay hands on the ropes and bless them. Then I give them to the person, who wears them and gets well. These ropes help the sick person because they are prayed for and blessed before the person uses them.

One respondent said that it was important for a person on whom ropes or strings had been fastened not to loosen them 'until they snap by themselves'. She said, 'By the time they eventually snap, you will be healed.'

Staffs are also common in many Pentecostal-type churches. Scriptural precedent is found in the use of a staff by Moses and other Old Testament prophets. A member of the Jerusalem Apostolic Church in Zion said that the staff was the hallmark of the prophet. Prophets beat people with staffs under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he explained, and they were not hurt. In addition, water was

splashed on people and ropes tied on their bodies; these methods all helped to bring healing. A member of the St Paul Spiritual Church of God said that the staffs were the 'holy sticks' of God which, when placed on people, could heal them. The staffs had 'power in them', he said, because they had been prayed for by the prophets. A member of the St John AFM offered the following justification for the symbolic healing practices in his church:

The staff symbolises the staff that Moses used to perform miracles. The water that is given to people must first be prayed for by the ministers or the prophets, and only then is it able to heal you. As far as ropes are concerned - the Bible says that Paul used handkerchiefs to heal the people Healing goes hand in hand with faith - a person must believe.

Church badges also are believed by some to bring protection and healing, although most members said that the badge was simply a method of identification. Many respondents from the Pentecostal-type churches were very careful to point out that the symbol was useless without faith in God being exercised by the sufferer. One respondent added that these things were ineffective unless a person had faith - in God, in the prophet, and in the symbols being used.

2.5 Healing methods in the ZCC

In the ZCC the most common healing method, as in many other indigenous churches, is the sprinkling with 'blessed water' (in Sotho, *meetse a thapelo*, 'water that has been prayed for'). The use of water appears to be more of a protective and cleansing ritual rather than a healing one. Blessed water has in fact many uses: it is used to purify people or objects after they have become contaminated (such as after a funeral), to welcome visitors, for protection against sorcery and misfortune, for the obtaining of employment, for abundant harvests, for cooking and washing, and for the 'gate test' by prophets at church services (see chapter three). It is apparently not always necessary for the water to be prayed for by a ZCC prophet or minister. Sometimes ZCC members may obtain the water for themselves and pray for it. A father whose children were ill at night, for example, prayed for a cup of water and gave it to the children to drink, and they recovered.

The source and the type of the water is important. Our fieldworker was told to collect water from a certain spring near Brits, which he should use for his healing. When I asked whether the spring had any particular ritual significance I was told that it was simply a place revealed to a prophet by the Spirit. They

had the prerogative to identify any such specific place in their prophesying, and the important thing was to carry out their instructions implicitly. The ZCC now also uses special tea and coffee made for healing purposes, labelled (in Sotho) *tea ya bophelo* (the tea of life). One ZCC informant told us how his child was healed from a deformity known as *poala* when the child was given this tea, together with water from a spring.

In the ZCC the use of symbolic healing objects is known as *mohau* ['grace'], and it is justified from the Bible by referring to Paul's use of articles of clothing to heal people in Acts 19:12 (Dzivhani 1992:18). Walking sticks blessed by the Bishop, ropes and strings or strips of cloth worn around the body are also believed to have protective powers. Strips of blue cloth known as *khutane* have to be worn in a secret place in their clothes to protect members against assaults and lightning. Similarly, ZCC members tie copper wires across their gates or in their houses, to protect against sorcery and lightning. Almost every ZCC member interviewed stressed the importance of observing the *ditaelo* ('instructions') given in order to be safe. This *ditaelo* is a sort of secret and personal law which the member may not divulge to anyone else. Some ZCC members also attach significance to the church badge as a source of protection, given to each member after baptism. The badge is a token of faithfulness to the church, a symbol of solidarity and unity with ZCC members everywhere. A person with a badge on will not dare to drink or smoke, taboos to all ZCC members.

Another method of healing in the ZCC is that of pricking, in which a prophet prescribes that a patient be pricked on the hands, legs or in the nostrils in order to get rid of what is traditionally believed to be the source of sickness and pain, impure blood. Salt is used to clean the stomach and excess bile through vomiting. The use of a small piece of wood (*kotana*), a sheet of paper waved rapidly over the patient's body, sand from a certain river or dam, and other objects named by the prophets are all common healing customs in the ZCC. We witnessed people coming forward to be blessed in the church services, when the ministers patted them on their heads with pieces of paper. It is important to note, though, that behind all these practices is the fundamental conviction that a prerequisite for protection is the prior confession of sins, without which the 'medicine' is useless.

All 168 of the ZCC members interviewed believed in the importance of healing by the use of symbolic objects, but some were careful to point out that the healing does not come because of any intrinsic power in the objects themselves, but because of a person's faith in God. One ZCC member said that ZCC people do not depend only upon these symbols, as 'most of the time we pray'. Another member said that without prayer the symbolic objects would not work.

A young ZCC woman felt that the objects are only signs to identify you with your church, and they have no intrinsic power to heal. Another ZCC woman thought that these symbols were like school uniforms - they told others to which 'school' you belonged. Another ZCC member observed that people must have faith in God and not in either the minister or prophet or in the church - for it is God alone who will help them. Another said that only Jesus can help a person when troubled by sickness; what is needed is faith and prayer. One ZCC member made the following illuminating statement:

I believe that one can be healed or delivered by the use of symbolic objects - I believe that with all my heart. Even though I cannot explain how it happens, one thing I know is that we have been troubled by people at my place many times. After taking perhaps a rope or some water, we find that no further trouble occurs, and we are delivered in that way. Sorcerers [Sotho: *baloi*] are afraid of a person who prays; so when you pray for an object like a rope, or you pray for water and sprinkle it around your house - when the sorcerers come they just see the glory of God. They find you with the ropes that have been prayed for. I know these people are afraid of prayer. How the power is transferred from the rope or the water to the place that is paining, or how the water scares the sorcerers away from your place - that I cannot really explain; but it works!

It was clear that many ZCC members in Soshanguve felt that the important thing was not the symbol itself, but the prayer that was offered to God and the faith that was exercised, without which the symbol would be useless. Several ZCC respondents placed the emphasis on prayer rather than on the healing symbol. One woman said that one could be set free from all kinds of trouble through praying and waiting on God for the answer, which did not always come immediately. God would solve all human problems in his time, she said.

The ZCC has special times when the sick are attended to, and it seems that this does not usually take place on Sundays, which is set aside for public worship. In Soshanguve, Wednesdays and Saturdays are used to minister to the sick.

2.6 Healing as manifestation of divine power

In summary, therefore, healing plays a major role in African Pentecostalism, both in its recruitment and in its day-to-day life and liturgy. There is no essential difference in the theology behind the different healing methods

practised in these churches. Members, however, consider there to be considerable differences between the methods used by the Pentecostal churches and the IPC on the one hand, and most Pentecostal-type churches on the other. The issue seems to be not whether symbols are used in healing, but what types of symbols are used. Pentecostals, and Modise in the IPC, seldom use material symbolic objects, whereas in most Pentecostal-type churches their use is one of the most common practices of their church life. All agree that it is God who heals, and that he heals the one who really believes. Thus healing is always a manifestation of the power of God.

Pentecostals emphasise divine healing through prayer and the laying on of hands; in the IPC the emphasis is upon the words that Modise speaks and the confession of sins to him. In indigenous Pentecostal-type churches divine healing is effected through prayer and the use of symbolic objects, and often accompanied by the confession of sins. Pentecostals stress the importance of prayer and faith in God; IPC members emphasise the role of prior confession of sins to Modise and faith in his power to heal and his words of instruction. In most Pentecostal-type churches, symbolic objects like holy water, staffs, ropes and strings are used for purification, protection, prosperity, success and healing, and are seen as visible manifestations of God's power to heal. Without faith in this power of God, the symbols are useless. The ZCC, possibly more than any other indigenous church in South Africa, has developed the use of symbolic healing objects to include sanctified sticks, pieces of wood, cloths, tea and coffee, copper wires, pricking needles, papers, smoke, sand, and salt, to name but a few. Several of these objects bear a direct parallel to traditional healing methods, and in the traditional context they are very meaningful.

In assessing the value of symbolic healing in indigenous Pentecostal-type churches, we must be careful that we do not simply look at the issue as a repetition of traditional magic that obscures the Christian message. Traditionally, African people did not usually distinguish between the symbolic object itself and that which it represented. Our respondents, however, did not appear to have this problem. It is important to distinguish between the **form** of the healing practices (which might indeed resemble the traditional diviner's methods) and their **content** (which is often diametrically opposed to traditional practices). In the views of the members themselves, the symbols pointed to the power of God. We did not find many people who thought that the symbolic objects used in healing had any intrinsic power in themselves, which is a perceptible departure from traditional beliefs. It was only prayer, a person's faith in God, and the power of God which gave efficacy to the symbols, without which they were useless. Daneel (1974:233) found the same to be true in Zimbabwe, and what he said is also very significant in the South African context:

For them [Zionist officials], the objects used ... is primarily **the visual symbolic concretization of the Divine Power**, which in itself has no medicative effect. The interpretation of these symbols ties up closely with traditional thought processes. The Zionist approach draws its strength precisely from the fact that these symbols meet traditionally conceived needs and are comprehensible for the Shona. [emphasis in the original]

An evangelist in the Christian Apostolic Church in Zion whom we met gave the following wise assessment:

There is no greater power than God's power to heal through the laying on of hands. This is the only method I use. People who believe in symbols can also heal people. Healing objects do help those who believe in them. A person operates according to how God has anointed him.

Nevertheless, as Daneel (1974:338) has warned, we must not overlook the possible danger of misinterpretation here. To some people the healing symbols become something other than symbols of God's power, and are seen as having magical power in themselves. This is particularly the case (as is true of all varieties of Christian expression both inside and outside Africa) when, with the passing of time, members observe certain rituals because they have become traditions of the church, and not because they really understand their symbolic significance. In these instances the forms remain while the meaning has become obscured. The result is a syncretism which is neither true to African traditional religion nor truly Christian. But this problem is by no means peculiar to African Pentecostalism. All types of church members throughout the world tend to attach magical interpretations to symbols, so that the meaning has changed. Turner (1979:167) points out that 'a magical interpretation of the Christian sacraments is a constant menace in Christian history and is not peculiar to these new churches'.

3 DELIVERANCE FROM TROUBLE

3.1 Concepts of misfortune and evil

We have seen that salvation in African Pentecostalism is a holistic salvation which embraces not only the theoretical concept of the salvation of the soul, but also the practical here-and-now expression of salvation as healing from sickness and deliverance from all types of evil and misfortune. The question 'Where does misfortune come from?' produced some interesting answers in our interviews.

Most Pentecostals and Pentecostal-type people saw Satan (the devil) as the author of evil and misfortune, the personification of everything that went wrong in Christians' lives. He is the one who comes to steal the things that God wants Christians to have. In this respect, our respondents showed evidence of a biblical orientation. David Bosch (1987:40) pointed out that Bible translators in Africa usually could not find an African 'dynamic equivalent' for Satan, so kept the word 'Satan' and Africanised it. He suggested that because this word had 'zero meaning' in traditional African cosmology, African people tended to equate it with the 'dark side' of God, 'a divine manifestation with which we have to remain on friendly terms'. The question also needs to be asked to what extent have African Christians been influenced by an equally erroneous Western dualistic idea of Satan as the all-powerful antithesis of God - a concept, incidentally, which is quite common in Western Pentecostal circles. There was sometimes a tendency among African Pentecostals to place the blame for all evil in the world squarely on the shoulders of the devil. Misfortune included sickness, unemployment, poverty, violence, and all things which steal joy from Christians - these things all came from the devil, said one AFM respondent. Several Pentecostal respondents said that they did not believe in misfortune at all, and that it was not part of the experience of Christians. One Pentecostal woman said that Satan 'preached bad luck to the mind of a person'. Another said that he did not believe in bad luck because it went hand in hand with bad omens. These were superstitions which should be rejected by true Christians.

Respondents saw other sources of evil and misfortune as well. People themselves were often the source of trouble. The human causation of evil is a prominent feature in African traditional religion with its background of witchcraft and sorcery (Bosch 1987:41). In this respect, the failure to keep certain traditional taboos or to engage in what was perceived as antisocial behaviour resulted in evil. This idea was sometimes echoed in the churches. In particular, people who did not keep the rules of the church or the instructions of the prophets or other church leaders might find trouble or misfortune as a result. In the IPC this belief was particularly strong. 'I don't believe in misfortune,' said one member of this church. 'A person attacked by misfortune is a person who does not do what our Father Modise says. He will not be able to protect a person who does not obey his laws.' These and similar ideas are not too far removed from the traditional belief in the withdrawal of the protection of the ancestors from those who do not correctly observe the ancestor cult.

An independent Pentecostal pastor commented that bad luck was a curse which resulted from people living contrary to the principles of the Bible. Another Pentecostal said that misfortune was the chastisement of God which came to people who disobeyed his Word. Misfortune came to people who did not respect their parents, or who did not pray. One respondent felt that any person

who did wrong things would reap misfortune as a result. A St John member thought that misfortune was God's punishment for people who disobeyed him. Sometimes a person will have misfortune because of a personal fear and hatred of other people, said one respondent. This misfortune is the person's own fault; it is brought on oneself.

Many of our respondents gave answers which reflected the traditional African beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery. The witch, observed David Bosch (1987:41) 'is the author of evil *par excellence*'. In our research, misfortune was believed to come from bewitching by people, 'especially your neighbours', declared one man. 'Bad luck' was something that happened to unbelievers who were still under the curse of sorcery and witchcraft, said one Pentecostal man. A member of the Apostolic Church in Zion and a member of the IPC each considered that misfortune came from sorcerers and witchcraft, 'when you follow them', added the IPC member. One respondent gave us the following interesting explanation:

Misfortune comes from people who do not like you. A person's heart is very wicked. In our culture we believe that a person can wish you misfortune, can use *muti* against you, and can even pray to God that you do not prosper People who have grudges in their hearts, who have not forgiven you for something you have done, may pray to God that misfortune should come to you, and that prayer will be answered People pray against you and bewitch you.

Thus indirectly this woman believed that evil comes from God - again a traditional African view, in which the Western dualism between 'God' and his adversary Satan is unknown (Bosch 1987:40). 'Prayer' in the above instance becomes a type of spell-casting to bring misfortune on others with God's help! The solution to this sort of trouble is to have a more powerful prayer than that which has been pitted against you. One robed Zionist respondent said that when a person is bewitched, the afflicted should use water, ropes, or badges which have been prayed for, because this more powerful prayer 'will counteract all the spells that have been put on you'. The sufferer should also not forget to pray individually. A ZCC member said that misfortune came from God - because God loves some people and hates others, according to the Bible, he explained.

Trouble can also come from the ancestors whose instructions have not been explicitly obeyed, said some church members. A ZCC minister declared that when a person did not heed the instructions of the ancestors, trouble would ensue; but that this was not misfortune at all, as the ancestors were disciplining the person for disobedience - just as God punished the Israelites when they were disobedient, he observed. A ZCC member explained that his father had been

a traditional diviner, and that as the son he was supposed to take over his position after he died. When he joined the ZCC he became a prophet, thereby fulfilling the wishes of his ancestors, and he was set free from the obligation to become a diviner. He said that if he had not become a prophet he would have had misfortune in his life. A member of the Saviour Apostolic Church considered that bad luck did not come from God, but from the ancestors.

It appears, therefore, that African Pentecostals have both a biblical view of evil as emanating from Satan and from personal sin, and a traditional view which sees evil primarily in terms of witchcraft and sorcery. These two views of evil are not usually in antithesis, as very often it is believed that Satan himself inspires witchcraft and sorcery; some even see the sorcery as synonymous with Satan (Bosch 1987:47). Connected with the traditional view was the idea that failure to keep certain taboos laid down by the church would result in evil. This becomes for many a powerful controlling factor. The traditional corollary is the failure to observe the instructions of the ancestors, given through the diviners. Views of evil and misfortune did not differ considerably amongst our respondents, and there was no perceived contradiction between them.

3.2 African exorcisms

When our preliminary survey results started to emerge, it appeared superficially as if exorcism was not widely practised in indigenous Pentecostal-type churches in South Africa, unlike Daneel's findings in Zimbabwe. It seemed that there was even resistance to the idea of 'demon possession' as a Western intrusion in the minds of some indigenous church people, as we shall see below. I have now come to realise that exorcism plays a major role in the activities of these churches, even though the 'theory' behind exorcism is unknown to many members, and only a few were able to say much about it. Nevertheless, as Oosthuizen (1987:77) points out, exorcism is 'an important activity ... considered to be of importance to the pastoral ministry in the African context'. In this respect, I identify with those who emphasise the 'liberating value' of a ministry of exorcism, 'which appears to confront the existential needs and fears of people in a ritually understandable and therefore psychologically and religiously satisfying manner' (Daneel 1990:220).

We had one description of an exorcism by a St Engenas ZCC member in Soshanguve. She said that a person with a demon was 'possessed by the ancestral spirit', and was a fellow member of the church choir. During a choir item she started to behave strangely, running away from the rest of the choir members. Some of them gave chase, and eventually caught and subdued her after a struggle. They gathered around her shouting at the demon, singing and

clapping their hands. Then a prophet gave her ashes that had been prayed for. She ate them, and she was delivered. A member of the Apostolic Church in Zion related how a demented man came into the church, and could not be controlled by ten men. He was tearing his clothes, screaming terribly. Eventually he was forced to drink 'blessed water' and was tied with ropes around his wrists, ankles and waist. For three days church members prayed for him day and night until he was set free. Some respondents also related how an evil spirit called *Utokoloshe* was exorcised from houses. Some Pentecostal-type members said that demon possession meant that a person was mentally deranged or retarded. One ZCC respondent told of his brother who spent a lot of time 'talking alone to himself'. He took him to the 'Apostolics', where he was delivered.

Exorcism is also practised among Pentecostals to varying degrees. In some churches it is seldom seen, whilst in others it is a fairly common occurrence. A person may be demonised in various ways. Usually the manifestations occur when prayer is being offered. These manifestations involve different things, such as shouting and screaming, unkempt or unwashed appearance, restlessness, violent contortions of the body (often accompanied by extraordinary strength), jumping, falling to the ground, and running around the room. Pastors and people specialising in a 'ministry of deliverance' will sometimes pray for demonised people for a long time until the demons are subdued and exorcised. The AFM in Soshanguve have members whose special ministry it is to cast out demons. They must not only deal with the problem in the church services, but also follow up the people for some time until their deliverance is established. Exorcism becomes a very important feature in pastoral therapy. As Daneel (1990:220) points out in relation to Zionists and Apostles in Zimbabwe, 'many church leaders use exorcism as a pastoral instrument to combat wizardry beliefs, the accompanying fears and the antisocial forces thought to be at work'.

One respondent from a mission church background told us something she had seen at a Pentecostal tent campaign in Mabopane. A deranged woman was brought into the tent, tied down with chains. After prayer was made she began to shriek, jump and fall on the ground, until she became still. Many people in that tent heard her later 'testify' about what had happened, and that she had been set free. An AFM respondent told of another case of a demonised man in a house meeting in Soshanguve. The Christians had been fasting and praying the previous day for this specific meeting which was in an outsider's home. When an 'altar call' was given at the end of the service for those who wanted to 'receive Christ', a man stood up, sat down, and stood up again. When the pastor started to pray for him, he began to jump up and down and scream. The respondent said that when she looked into his eyes they had changed colour and had become a 'fiery green'. The Christians prayed and tried to hold the man

down, but he pulled them around the room. Eventually he lay flat on the floor, still screaming and coughing. After some time, while the Christians continued to pray, the demon left and the man was quiet.

A member of an independent Pentecostal church related how a young woman had attended one of the regular Wednesday night 'home cell' meetings in her house. While her husband was 'sharing the Word of God' this woman began to behave strangely. She started laughing uncontrollably. The respondent was annoyed, and began to rebuke in the name of Jesus Christ what she perceived as an evil spirit. The woman jumped up, continually laughing and lifting her dress over her head, running around the house and becoming violent. The Christians prayed for her, rebuking the demon in the name of the Lord for about four hours, until eventually the woman spoke: 'You don't like me. I will go away.' Throughout this time she was in a type of trance. She finally became quiet, and was delivered from the demon. She then asked 'What are you doing?' as she came to her senses again.

A week later another incident occurred in the same house which was also perceived as demon activity. A neighbour visited the meeting and at the end she started screaming while the people were praying. The Christians began to rebuke the demon. The evil spirit began to speak through the woman that she was supposed to go to Giyani, Gazankulu, as her father, a Tsonga diviner, had wanted her to be trained as a diviner. The woman had refused, and her father had bewitched her. On this occasion, which was also a four-hour session of deliverance, the woman vomited, shook uncontrollably, her legs swelled, and she was violent. She too was delivered during this time. She no longer had these problems, and she was now a member of the church.

One cannot reflect on the descriptions of these 'deliverances' without honestly acknowledging the reality of the help that was received. To suggest that the exorcisms reinforced the sufferer's preoccupation with the African spirit world and the fear of evil spirits, as some have done (e.g. Shorter 1985:197), ignores the fact that for many Africans exorcism provides certain relief from psychological stress. Daneel (1990:227), with a case study of Bishop Nyasha's ministry of exorcism in Zimbabwe, proposed that the correct Christian response should be to 'confront those beliefs [in wizardry] with the message of the one Scapegoat, Christ, and exorcise the invading spirits as part of the solution to a tradition-based problem, despite the risk of misinterpretation in certain quarters'. He concluded that Nyasha and his assistants had made (and this applies equally to the exorcisms described in this research):

a more original, more effective contribution to wizardry-related pastoral care than many a mission church which misunderstood, rejected and ultimately negated the wizardry beliefs and the concomitant needs of African people.

(Daneel 1990:246-247)

3.3 Demons, ancestors and prophets

It is also apparent that for some Pentecostals and Pentecostal-type church members, demon possession and 'ancestor possession' were the same thing, and a few were bold enough to spell this out in unambiguous terms. It was clear that for many of our respondents, the 'ancestor' was in fact a demon who needed to be exorcised in the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. The exorcisms, therefore, pointed to a confrontation between the Holy Spirit and the so-called 'ancestors'. A member of an indigenous Apostolic church said in answer to the questions on demon possession that a person who believed in ancestors could be possessed by demons. The 'ancestor' who purported to speak out of this person was not an ancestor at all, but a demon. She felt that diviners who said that the ancestors wanted this or that thing done were deceiving the people. They tried to please the 'ancestors', and nothing good came from all their efforts. This respondent was one of the most outspoken Pentecostal-type church members on this subject: 'I absolutely do not believe in ancestors', she said. 'We need to pray hard so that we can be strong enough to stand against them.' Likewise, a member of a Swazi Zionist church defined a demon possessed person as one who had the spirit of the ancestors who would speak through that person. Two different indigenous church members who were clearly opposed to prophets said that prophets were possessed by demons, and this was why they were able to predict the future. This view was repeated by another, who suggested that a prophet who did not speak the truth was demon possessed. Another respondent said that the traditional diviners were possessed by demons.

This curious anomaly between the 'ancestor spirits' and demons was well demonstrated by an interview we had with a ZCC minister in October 1991. His response to the question 'Have you ever seen someone possessed by demons?' was illuminating and, because of its significance, it is reproduced here:

As a pastor and a member of the ZCC I have seen a lot of people being 'possessed' by what you call 'demons'. But we do not believe that people are 'demon possessed'; people have got the ancestral spirit. When white missionaries came to our

countries they looked at us as people who needed deliverance. They did not bother themselves to try to understand our culture, our ancestors, and our background The Bible might call it 'demon possession', but we in our culture, in our context in Africa do not call it that. We know this is the spirit of the ancestors; and we respect a person with such a spirit because that person is able to communicate on our behalf with the ancestors.

This view was echoed by several other members of indigenous churches. A St John member, for example, said 'We don't call manifestations of the spirits "demons".' Likewise, a member of the St Paul Spiritual Church of God said the following in response to our question 'Have you ever seen someone possessed by demons?':

Yes, I have seen someone possessed by 'spirits' - we don't call them 'demons'; we call them 'spirits'. This person will jump around and fall to the ground. We call this spirit in a person the spirit of the prophet, because when one sees something one is able to speak a message to the people after one has recovered.

It appears that for many members of indigenous churches, to be 'demon possessed' is not necessarily a bad thing. These two respondents obviously thought that the expression, although foreign to African culture, described a certain condition of traditional ancestor possession which was regarded with respect. This fact may explain why some members of the ZCC and other Pentecostal-type churches thought that a prophet had a 'demon' spirit. They did not say, however, that the 'demon' needed to be exorcised. Part of the reason for this may have been a reluctance to reveal, in a patently Western intrusion into African religion, any opposition to the ancestors which might display a seeming disregard for African cultural values. Others may have said this to deliberately criticise the prophets for their own reasons. In the Pentecostal-type churches, few patients are likely to seek out for therapy prophets who are known to have 'demon' spirits. The ambivalence possibly exists more in the theoretical reflection asked for in our interviews than in actual practice. This would be more accurately measured by further empirical observation of exorcisms.

3.4 Deliverance from evil

Most Pentecostals said that the way in which Christians were set free from trouble was by believing for God's help, by reading the Word of God, and by prayer. One respondent said that reading the Bible resulted in discovering God's

answers for problems. Meditating on these answers helped one to apply them to life. Prayer was a form of spiritual warfare by which Satan was defeated. Christians should believe that God would act to deliver them from the trouble, because God desired to take care of his children. He was not the author of evil, and wanted only good to come about. Another Pentecostal respondent emphasised that Christians should know their position in Christ, and the authority God had given them to overcome every work of Satan.

Pentecostals and Pentecostal-type people are sometimes called by members of other churches to deal with a particular problem troubling the family. An Anglican man told us that his family was being troubled by an evil spirit in the house, a *tokoloshe*. He related the story as follows:

During the night while we were asleep the *tokoloshe* would come and walk on the roof, make strange noises in the kitchen, and we would be unable to sleep. The house would be very hot, as if there were more than five heaters in the room. So we called the *bazalwane* to come and pray with us. They came and held a church service at our house. They prayed, binding the spirits, but still that same night the *tokoloshe* came. So I went back to report that the *tokoloshe* was still visiting us. They decided that they would have a time of fasting, praying and seeking the will of God. They set aside three days to fast and pray. On the fourth night they came back to my house and held another service. This service was quite different. I felt that God was with them; I sensed the presence of the Holy Spirit, and I was convinced that something was going to happen that day. They prayed and prayed. The *tokoloshe* used to come at about half past twelve. They prayed until two or three o'clock in the morning. The *tokoloshe* did not come that night. The next night they came again to pray with us, and then left. The *tokoloshe* disappeared, and we have never had trouble with this again.

Several members of Pentecostal-type churches had a similar understanding of deliverance from evil forces to that of most Pentecostals. Some said that a person could keep free from trouble by reading the Bible and praying, and by attending church. Other respondents had very fixed ideas on how a person could be freed from adversity. For them, this deliverance was possible only if one observed certain instructions from the church. For ZCC members that usually meant observing the *ditaelo* (instructions) given by the church authorities. A ZCC minister told us that two main things were needed for a person to be set

free from trouble: firstly, the person must be 'in good standing with God'; and secondly, the instructions passed down from the ancestors through the mouth of the prophets must be carried out.

This man also told us that the ZCC helped its members to protect themselves against sorcerers by providing them with brown paper, which they took with them when visiting non-members. If they were offered tea or food, they would light the brown paper and wave the smoke over the food; they were thereby protected from possible poison by sorcery. The ZCC tea was to be drunk every morning before going to work or school, as this gave additional protection. The tea leaves were to be put inside the shoes, so that if perchance a ZCC member should walk where a sorcerer's spells had been placed on the ground, he or she would be protected from harm. ZCC ministers should carry holy staffs and whips with them at night to defend themselves against *tsotsis* (hooligans) and to crack the whip at any *tokoloshe* that might be encountered. A crack of the whip apparently rendered him powerless.

For IPC members the instructions to be followed included remembering to use the *diphaki* ('witnesses') given through Father Modise. In the IPC *Ntate* Modise was the ultimate deliverance from trouble. When all else failed, a visit to him would solve the problem. One member said that God had raised up Modise to lead the entire nation, and therefore his orders had to be obeyed implicitly. Other Zionist and Apostolic church respondents said that deliverance came by heeding the instructions of the prophet. One ceremony practised in the Apostolic Church in Zion was that of a ritual bath, in which the prophet would wash the person having misfortune in order to purify him or her from the trouble.

4 SALVATION IN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

The African world is filled with fearsome and unpredictable occurrences demanding a Christian answer. Soteriology in Africa must be relevant to the whole of Africa's existence, and seek to proclaim a message of deliverance from sin, from sickness, and from the very real fear of evil that haunts many people. Whether its source is Satan, sorcery or witchcraft, or the omission or commission of a person, evil, trouble, misfortune, disaster and affliction are the lot of people everywhere. The Pentecostal and Pentecostal-type churches in Africa are endeavouring to provide a solution to this pressing need.

Our respondents said that affliction and trouble came from various sources: from Satan, from failure to keep the instructions of the Bible or of the church leaders, from hatred and fear of other people, from witchcraft and sorcery, from

the ancestors, and even (said some) from God. The solution was to trust in a power that was greater than the power that was against you. Most church members said that faith in God and his ability to bring deliverance was the prerequisite for salvation. To many this meant times of special or prolonged prayer, sometimes with fasting, and the reading of God's Word, the Bible. As in the healing practices, methods of deliverance differed according to the church type. Some Pentecostal-type church members said that deliverance was effected through the use of symbols like holy water, ashes, ropes, staffs and whips to drive away evil spirits. Instructions given by church leaders were also to be carried out carefully before deliverance was obtained. The symbols used in healing were almost invariably believed to be powerless without faith in God; the objects were not usually seen as having any intrinsic power.

Samuel Otwang's encounter with Modise at Silo raises the issue of the importance of the confession of sins for salvation. In many indigenous Pentecostal-type churches, confession of sins precedes baptism and is therefore a prerequisite for cleansing and admittance to the company of the 'saved'. In the IPC, however, confession of sins must be made to Modise himself, the 'Representative' of God, before healing can be received. Only a person who has been 'healed' in this way (Modise calls it 'spiritual healing') can be admitted to the chosen flock. There is believed to be no salvation outside the IPC and Modise. The fact that Modise has the power not only to forgive sins, but to identify **what** the sins are and to force a confession, is of extreme theological importance in an assessment of the IPC. He thereby becomes exclusively the one in whom salvation is deposited, he alone holding the keys of the gate to the kingdom of heaven. There is a sense in which this tendency to manipulate control over other people and to claim divine sanction for personal opinions is not confined to Modise and to the IPC - it is found in most, perhaps all, expressions of Christianity. Pentecostals who manipulate others through their disapproval of anything or anyone that does not correspond to their 'norms' of Christian behaviour (without real biblical justification) are also guilty!

The subject of exorcism and 'demon possession' was a controversial one, particularly with some members of indigenous churches who did not view the phenomenon in a negative light at all. On the contrary, they saw the expression as describing the state of trance or 'ancestor possession' which indicated that a person was to be used as a channel of communication between the ancestors and their offspring. Such a condition definitely did not need to be exorcised, in their estimation. The ambivalence in the minds of some members of Pentecostal-type churches as to the source of prophetic revelation, being either the Holy Spirit or the ancestors (or both), was a significant finding which differed from Daneel's (1974:350) findings in Zimbabwe. There the Shona Zionists and Apostles 'clearly distinguish between the functions of the ancestral spirits and of the Holy

Spirit'. I have not yet had the opportunity to talk with many of the leaders and the prophets themselves about this issue, and this may be the weakness of this finding which needs further investigation. But with many of our respondents, the phenomenon of demonisation indicated a state of severe emotional stress and bondage which needed deliverance. Strange behaviour such as violent or unruly actions, screaming and 'madness' were all seen as manifestations of the presence of evil spirits (demons) which needed to be exorcised. This exorcism is achieved during sustained prayer (sometimes for several hours) in which the demons are rebuked in the name of Jesus Christ. The church's ministry of exorcism therefore becomes, as Daneel (1990:220) has pointed out, 'an effective means of communicating the Christian good news of Christ's Lordship over all principalities and powers in the universe'.

Daneel (1983:58) spoke about the 'moralistic gospel' of Western missionaries to Africa which failed to 'spell out convincingly the salvation of the entire man' and was 'insufficiently related to the perplexities caused by illness and misfortune'. The salvation proclaimed in all types of African Pentecostalism has to do with the deliverance of the whole person from the totality of the evil forces which are ranged against one's very existence. The methods used to receive this salvation and the perceptions concerning the means of grace sometimes differed. Nevertheless, soteriology in these churches proclaims an omnipotent and compassionate God who concerns himself with the weals and woes of humankind. Bishops, prophets, pastors, evangelists and ordinary church members exercise the authority that they believe has been given them by God to announce the good news that Jesus Christ saves from sin, from sickness, and from every conceivable form of evil and 'darkness'. This is the gospel of salvation which the church must proclaim clearly and unambiguously in Africa.

CHAPTER 5

Theology and Christology

1 THEOLOGY AT THE GRASS ROOTS

1.1 A contribution to African theology

African Pentecostal churches, and especially indigenous Pentecostal-type churches, seldom have an elaborately worked-out theology such as is found in most mission churches. Nevertheless, these churches do have a distinct contribution to make to African Christian theology, as was outlined by Daneel (1989b:51-57). They have inculturated Christianity in Africa in such a way that they are of considerable consequence for African theology. Daneel (1989b:54) considers that their main significance is twofold: it lies firstly in their 'spontaneous indigenisation of Christianity, uninhibited by direct Western control', and secondly in their unique erection of 'bridgeheads between the Christian gospel and traditional thought forms'. Fashole-Luke (1976:144) said that African indigenous churches 'constitute part of the raw material for the building of African Christian theologies'. He pointed out that a careful and critical study needed to be made of these churches 'to assess their value for the development of African theology' (:148).

Although the indigenous churches have little formalised theology, they have what Hastings (1976:54) termed a 'praxis and a spirituality in which a theology is profoundly implicit'. The fact that indigenous Pentecostal-type churches may have no written theology does not mean that they have none at all. Theology is our human response to God's Word. The African pastors, bishops or prophets who lay hands on the sick, and lead their congregations in the rituals of their

worship, are enacting theology. In fact, this giving out of theology is at least as important as taking it in at a theological institution! The members of the African Pentecostal 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. And in this respect they have an extremely significant part to play in the formulating of African theology. The African Pentecostal and Pentecostal-type churches (albeit largely unconsciously) have made Christianity relevant to and expressive of Africa (Ukpong 1984:520). Probably more than any other form of Christianity in Africa, these churches have given a uniquely African character to their faith. In many respects they have attained the goals which formal African theology is still seeking.

Mbiti (1976:16) said that African indigenous churches were 'ultimately an expression of theological protest', and it is the formalistic, rationalistic and often irrelevant theology that African indigenous churches implicitly challenge. Because theology is our human response to God's Word, Christianity must be expressive of everyday living - or be in danger of becoming inconsequential. In this way the African Pentecostal churches have become an expression of theological protest.

1.2 Theology in practical expression

It was therefore important in this research to discover just how ordinary church members live, experience and conceive of their faith. For this reason we went to the people in their homes, rather than their churches, and we spoke to members, rather than church leaders. In this way we were able to emphasise the people's objective conceptions of their Christian faith rather than toe the official line of the church. We did speak with leaders, and we did attend many church services to observe and participate with the people in their worship. We recorded sermons, but little sermon analysis has yet been attempted to discover how relevant the preaching was to life as experienced in the black townships. This must still be done. And so, the theology that will be described here is truly a people's theology, a theology at the grass roots as it is conceived by ordinary church members in their homes. This is definitely not an attempt to **formulate** an African Christian theology; it is rather a **description** of what we have encountered during the course of over two thousand different conversations with church members in Soshanguve. These conversations were always stimulating and interesting, and each conversation added another piece to the giant mosaic that was beginning to form. Sometimes attempts will be made to organise, analyse and reflect on what we have discovered - but the main purpose of this study is to describe a theology that is being lived out in the lives of the members of African Pentecostal churches every day.

1.3 African religious concepts

Before discussing concepts of God in African Pentecostalism, it is first necessary to outline how God was conceived in African traditional religion, so that one may be able to trace what continuity or discontinuity there might be between these concepts and the modern African Christian perceptions discussed here. I have discussed African traditional theism elsewhere (Anderson 1991:13-14), and will now reiterate some of the main thoughts expressed there.

Traditional African concepts of God revealed a certain ambivalence, at least to Western observers: the supreme being was at the same time very near (immanent) and very far away (transcendent). These seemingly irreconcilable opposites formed the heart of African theism. Perhaps it is true to say that African observers themselves acknowledge that God in traditional religion was predominantly transcendent. Nigerian theologian Bolaji Idowu (1973:153), for example, said that Africans placed 'strong emphasis' on the transcendence of God. This emphasis usually meant that most of the time the supreme being was remote from the everyday affairs of people. Because of this, he did not interfere with or harass humans, and was regarded as 'good'. But because of his simultaneous nearness, there were times (albeit infrequently) when people lived in dread of an unpredictable God who might cause calamity and distress. Kenyan John Mbiti (1969:43-45) cited several examples in African societies in which God was regarded as the ultimate source of affliction, misfortune, diseases, death and national calamities.

African traditional concepts of God were true to the holistic world view in which they were immersed. The underlying fatalism which characterised the traditional world view meant that the real concept of the supreme being was that he was too near for human comfort. But in Africa, it was usually human beings - and not God - who were the authors of evil. The evil sorcerer was the one to be feared in traditional Africa, and from whom protection must be sought. Christian theology in Africa does not so much have to correct a mistaken theism as to provide answers for this very real fear of evil, as I have discussed in the previous chapter.

It is also necessary for us to try to understand the concepts of power in African traditional thought. We will then be in a better position to appreciate the attempt made by the indigenous Pentecostal-type churches to fill the gap between these concepts with their inherent inadequacies, and the somewhat sterile theology 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 dependence on a power or powers operating from outside to which there is no 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 uncertain perils - a life that is full, prosperous, healthy, peaceful and secure. The African spirit world seems to form as clear a **preparatio evangelica** as can be found anywhere. The message that the African Pentecostal churches proclaimed was that this need for power was met by the power of the Spirit, given to a person permanently and unconditionally.

Surely the Christian message also has something to say to the inadequacies of traditional African spirit concepts! 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 be understood and evaluated only when such reinterpretations are seen in the light of the traditional world view. Only then will we be able to evaluate whether seeing theology (and more importantly, doing pneumatology) from the perspective of the indigenous Pentecostal-type African churches is in fact a bridge back to the 'heathen' past (cf Sundkler 1961:297). A comparison and contrast of the practices of the indigenous Pentecostal-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 humankind's refusal to accept the finality of death, must also be reinterpreted in the African milieu; here too, indigenous Pentecostal-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 dependent 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!

1.4 An obscured theology?

To what extent are the traditional African concepts of God carried over into the theology of Pentecostal and Pentecostal-type Christianity? Some have charged that African Pentecostals have so overemphasised pneumatology that the African spirit world, particularly the ancestor cult, has found new expression (eg

Oosthuizen 1968:129; Pauw 1960:207). It is also said that this overemphasis of pneumatology means that God is neglected and Jesus Christ overshadowed. Daneel (1987:258-259) has discussed these allegations, and I will evaluate them in the light of the present research in this and in the following chapter.

Our research in Soshanguve did not support these views. In fact, everyone we interviewed spoke more about God and Jesus Christ than they did about the Holy Spirit - they spoke about the Spirit only in response to our specific questions about this. In every part of our interviews, and in every area of life, all types of Pentecostal people spoke about the overarching importance of faith in God and in Jesus Christ. One member of a Pentecostal-type church said in reply to a question on the meaning of salvation that the most important thing to her was not whether a person was 'saved', but whether a person really believed in, and had had a personal encounter with, God. During Pentecostal and Pentecostal-type church services continual reference is made to God in song, testimony, prayer and preaching. In almost all of the services we attended there was never any suggestion that God the Father or Jesus Christ his Son had been neglected or superseded by the Spirit, for they were mentioned everywhere.

The emphasis on the Spirit is more evident through the practices of these churches than through the preaching, singing or testifying, so that we may say that there is a presupposed Christology in these churches, and that sometimes the Father and the Son are somewhat eclipsed by the Spirit. There is often an overriding preoccupation with the Holy Spirit who is active during the services, especially in the persons of the prophets and healers (in the case of Pentecostal-type churches), and in the persons of the pastors and preachers (in the case of Pentecostal churches). The key recruiters in these churches are the ones upon whom the Spirit has descended. The emphasis is often on the presence of the Holy Spirit, through Spirit baptism, healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues, exorcism and other Spirit manifestations. It may not be far from the mark to suggest that theology and Christology are dominated by pneumatology in some of these churches. This does not suggest, however, that there is no clear theology or Christology in these churches, or that pneumatology is overemphasised.

There was possibly one exception to this general characteristic of African Pentecostalism. In the IPC there appears to be such an emphasis on the person and powers of Modise that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are eclipsed. A curious situation exists in that although God (in Sotho languages *Modimo*) is regarded as the **general** name for God - much like *Elohim* in the Old Testament - Modise has had a 'revelation' of the true name of God ('fire' or *mollo* in Sotho-Tswana languages) to which he claims exclusive knowledge. Members are not allowed to utter this name, except in the secret prayer that Modise has

taught them to recite. Modise himself, in a sermon to his followers at Silo in March 1992, said the following:

The name of Jehovah was the Hebrew word for 'fire'. They respected it. The word must be honoured and never used in vain. 'Our God is a consuming fire' [Hebrews 12:29]. Jesus' name also is 'fire'. A human being also is 'fire'. This is the three in one - God, Jesus, and fire.

This type of 'theology' is frequently found in Modise's utterances. His entrance into the cathedral at Silo is heralded by the lighting of a lamp symbolic of this enigmatic knowledge of God. This appears to give Modise a special revelation of God which is unlike that of any other Christian church, and which in fact places him in a position of unequalled privilege among humankind. God once more is relegated to the periphery, and becomes the mysterious, transcendent somewhat remote being that he is in traditional religion. Modise, however, as the human 'Representative' (Tswana: *Moemedi*) of God takes over the functions of the ancestors in traditional religion. We will discuss this further below, but we must note in passing that whenever there is a focus on the privileged position of the Spirit-controlled leader or prophet, there is a danger that theology and Christology may be obscured, no matter how often God and Jesus may be mentioned. The traditional African notion of approaching a superior authority only through a go-between has sometimes resulted in a concept of a God who cannot be approached except through human mediation. Christ does not always fill that role, as we shall see.

In summary, the somewhat ambivalent and fatalistic traditional concept was of a transcendent, remote and unpredictable God who at the same time was an immanent and impending God to be feared and avoided. Instead of finding new expression (as some Western scholars have alleged) through the emphasis of African Pentecostals on the Holy Spirit, this traditional theism was thoroughly transformed in the lives of most of these Christians by faith in a personal God who had come near to people in Jesus Christ. In those exceptional cases in which the mediatorial function of the spiritual leader is stressed (as in the IPC, and to a lesser degree among a few Pentecostal-type prophetic groups) the traditional concept of God continues in a rather obscured theology.

2 CHRISTOLOGY AND MESSIANISM

2.1 The centrality of Jesus Christ

Several earlier researchers observed that what they regarded as an overemphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in African Pentecostal churches had resulted in

a weak Christology, as I have discussed elsewhere (Anderson 1991:36-37). It is alleged that Jesus Christ is hardly mentioned in these churches as a result, and that he has at least partially been superseded by the 'spiritual leader' in whom the Holy Spirit works pre-eminently. Our research indicates, however, that in these churches Christ is not assigned to the perimeter of faith; in fact, as Daneel (1987:259) observes, 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'. Some of these researchers had to re-evaluate their positions in the light of later empirical research. Sundkler (1961:297; 1976:304-305), for example, had to reassess his rather negative conclusions in this respect as he learned more about his subjects. Martin (1975:141) did a complete turnabout with regard to Kimbanguism, because of her close association with the movement. She did not, however, significantly change her earlier views on Zionism in Southern Africa, particularly with regard to the ZCC, with which she had almost no empirical contact.

Daneel (1989a:329-330) has in fact shown that any Christological weakness in Pentecostal-type churches, 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'. Certainly there are some exceptions, but generally speaking, Pentecostal-type churches give Jesus Christ a major place in their life and faith. To contend otherwise is to indulge in futile and misinformed speculation. Leaders of these churches themselves would be the first to acknowledge the centrality of Jesus Christ, and however it may seem to a Western-oriented observer, there is no conscious or unconscious attempt to depart from orthodox Christology. To my knowledge, empirical research has not indicated anything to the contrary. Several members of Pentecostal-type churches that we interviewed shared their faith in Jesus Christ as the basis for their Christian lives. 'Jesus is the one who saves us,' declared one ZCC member, 'He was sent by God to save people from their sins.' The official *ZCC Messenger* said in a recent article: 'The Zion Christian Church is a society of Christians who believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour and Son of God and that he died on the cross for our sins' (Mukhondo 1992:10). No 'weak' Christology there!

The Christological emphasis in African Pentecostalism is found most profoundly in the observation of the two sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, both of which are central to the life and faith of these churches. Each of these sacraments speaks of the centrality of the cross and the atonement of Christ for sins. Baptism identifies a believer with Christ in his own baptism, which in itself was a portent of his coming death and resurrection. In baptism, believers die to the old life, and are washed of their sins because of the sacrificial death of Christ. They rise from their burial under the water in newness of life, as Christ

too was resurrected from the tomb. They are then reminded of the significance of the death of Christ when they partake of the Communion. This becomes an occasion for self-examination and cleansing through the work of Christ on the cross. God in Christ is brought sublimely near to his people in these sacramental acts. The Christological significance of the sacraments is as strong in these churches as it is in other Christian churches worldwide.

One of the problems in the study of African indigenous churches is whether the followers of a charismatic leader have 'messianised' or even 'deified' their leader. It is important that any Western interpretation of what I would term the more 'radical' indigenous churches (those furthest from Western church norms) consider the African context in which the adulation of the church leader is couched. But at the same time, one cannot ignore the fact that sometimes Christ is overshadowed, and sometimes even replaced, by the founder or leader of the church. When this happens, we may refer to such churches as 'Messianic' churches; but they are very few and far between in South Africa.

2.2 'Messianism' and the ZCC

The ZCC is one church that has been termed a 'messianic' church. It is true that the bishop is an extremely important figure in the church. He is the personality on whom many of the church activities centre. Lukhaimane (1980:37) said that Engenas Lekganyane was 'to his underprivileged followers ... a messiah who had come to deliver them from bondage, especially from the horror of superstition and the power wielded by the medicine man'. Lukhaimane has apparently uncritically followed Western observers in giving the title 'messiah' to Lekganyane. He may have used the phrase unaware of its theological connotations, being an historian and not a theologian. Both Sundkler (1961:323) and Martin (1964:161) referred to Lekganyane as a 'messiah', although they had no empirical evidence to support this contention. The Lekganyanes themselves, and official ZCC literature, have expressly denied any messianic titles or divine status to the Lekganyanes. In the church magazine *The ZCC Messenger*, for example, Rafapa (1992:6) states that the three Lekganyanes, 'the apparently worldly spiritual leaders of the Church only vicariously preside for God'. It is believed by ZCC members that Engenas passed on his prophetic powers to his successors, first Edward and then Barnabas (Ramurumo). Lukhaimane (1980:43) states that the bishop 'fulfilled the same functions between God and man that the *badimo* [ancestors] had done in traditional religion. He was a messiah, a prophet for his followers.' Once again, this appears to be a Western interpolation, and it is unlikely that Lukhaimane, himself a St Engenas ZCC member, would still hold this view.

It is true that the deceased Lekganyanes sometimes appear to fulfil the protective functions of the ancestors for some members. In an article entitled 'The Lord is my Shepherd', Dr J L Maaga (1992:12-13), a medical practitioner and a ZCC member, described a trip he made to accompany Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane to the Transkei, during which white extremists tried to force his car off the road. He reported that a large white Mercedes Benz driven by 'the late Bishop Edward' came to his rescue and took him out of danger. Nevertheless, the author's intention in relating the incident was to show the protective power of God, of which Bishop Edward was a mere agent. His purpose was to show how 'the Lord would look after me during the trip'. Although Lekganyane did what any ancestor might have done, the result of this encounter was that this ZCC member praised God for his protection: 'I blinked a few times, and with a joyful heart began to sing "*Ke na le modisa*" ['I have a shepherd'].

ZCC members also sometimes speak of and pray to 'the God of Engenas, Edward and Barnabas' (Maaga 1992:12; Matanda 1992:37). But when this phrase is used, it is not intended to accord divine status to the Lekganyanes. We did not hear this phrase being used in public ZCC prayers. Usually the words 'in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit' were used. ZCC members do not pray to the Lekganyanes, and members denied these allegations. One member explained that the bishop is simply the leader of the church, and a man like all other men.

The appearance of the bishop at the annual Conferences is to many ZCC members the climax of the weekend's festivities, and all the faithful long to be as close to him as is humanly possible to receive some of his power. I witnessed the impressive sight of Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane marching at the head of his brass band, swinging his bishop's mitre. It was obviously the high point of the proceedings that all had been waiting for, and many were overcome with the emotion of the occasion. Not even the presence of the three leading political leaders in South Africa (Mandela, De Klerk and Buthelezi) at this historic gathering detracted from the bishop's finest hour - even though the bishop himself is a fairly diminutive and quietly spoken man. In the activities of the prophets, the bishop is often mentioned as being present to help and to guide, but the meaning of these expressions is unclear. The many ZCC members we interviewed did not emphasise the role of the bishop; in fact the great majority did not mention him at all. The ZCC cannot really be named a 'messianic movement' in the strict sense of the word. In the perceptions of ZCC members Lekganyane did not in any sense replace or supersede Jesus Christ. One ZCC member wrote 'We believe in Jesus Christ as the only Prince of Peace' (Mukhondo 1992:10). At ZCC services in Soshanguve and during the 1992 Easter Festival at Moria I witnessed Jesus Christ being given pre-eminence as the universal Lord, both in singing and in preaching.

2.3 Frederick Modise: the 'Representative' of God

On the other hand, the IPC seems to be a somewhat different case. Members of this church constantly refer to their leader, Frederick Modise, as the *Moemedi* ['Representative'], the ever-present one who is able to exercise supernatural powers and mediate between his followers and God. He appears in their literature with the oft-repeated English titles of 'our Father' and 'the Comforter'. Modise is a controversial figure among Christians in South Africa today, particularly in the black townships, and animated discussions about him and his church are frequently encountered in the media. The question to be asked is to what extent he is regarded by his followers as a sort of living messiah, a mediator between humankind and God.

Members of this church do not always agree in their views of Modise - although it would appear that all believe that he is some sort of mediator. To some he undoubtedly has divine status, and a personality cult centres on him. Modise's picture appears above the 'altar' in the centre of the auditorium at Silo, on shirts worn by the faithful, on all official church literature and throughout the offices at the headquarters. The faithful buy photographs of Modise and hang them on the walls of their homes. One IPC member told us that she believed that these photographs brought Modise into her home; he looked after the home and guarded the property. Another member told us that Modise was a mediator who prayed to God on people's behalf, and that through him people could know the will of God. He was the only one who knew how to 'pray spiritually' (Modise told us that himself), and he was teaching his followers how to pray. Whenever the faithful encountered difficulties they would pray according to Modise's instructions. One member said that she also prayed to Modise himself: 'I pray to him to heal me even when he is not present. He is able to heal you even though he is (physically) absent.' She also said that when she or a member of her family went to a medical doctor they would enter 'in the name of Modise *Moemedi*, who is able to reconcile you with the doctor'.

In IPC church services Modise is called *Moemedi* [Representative], which is also a Tswana translation for 'counsellor' or 'advocate' in the English Bible - a title describing the mediatorial work of both Christ and the Holy Spirit. In English he is referred to as the 'Comforter' (with a capital 'C') in printed literature of the IPC, which in the old Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible is a title of the Holy Spirit. He is praised in singing by this name, which often takes the place of the name of Christ or of God in hymns and songs which are well known in Pentecostal churches. People are exhorted in every IPC service to go to Silo (Zuurbekom) to meet Modise himself, who will heal them of all their sicknesses, solve all their problems, and bring them success and prosperity.

Modise was addressed in our presence as 'my Father' by his most senior assistant, Reverend Mphulo, a man at least in his sixties. He is also 'our Father' to his followers, and they are 'his children'. These various appellations appear to go beyond traditional respect. In the official, somewhat dated brochure of the church (IPHC sa:24) a lady member, Priscilla Maletse, testified that she saw a glorious light appearing at the pulpit whenever Modise spoke, and when she looked at his photographs. In the centre of the light were the words in Tswana '*Ke nna Jehova Modimo wa gago*' ('I am Jehovah your God'). It is uncertain whether these words were to be applied to Modise or to God (or whether the words were intentionally ambiguous). One of the most illuminating interviews in Soshanguve revealed that Modise is, at least in the minds of some of the members, divine. A member for eight years, with Modise's photographs all over her house, believed him to be both omniscient and omnipresent:

Our teachings are above the teachings of the prophets. Modise is not a prophet. He knows all of us who are his children. He protects us when we are sick. When I am sick I simply remember him and he heals me

She went on to say that Modise was the Holy Spirit:

The world will never have true freedom apart from Modise. The world is waiting for *Moemedi* Even the Whites are waiting for him; but they don't know that he has already come. Jesus said 'If I do not go the *Moemedi* will not come'. Fortunately, he has come, on 14 September 1962 [the date on which Modise was healed, marking the birth of the IPC].

When she was pressed to explain the relationship between Modise and the Holy Spirit, she was even more explicit:

The Holy Spirit came during Pentecost, and lastly when he entered Father Modise. No-one in this world has the Holy Spirit except him; in fact, he is the Holy Spirit himself. Jesus was rejected and denied. Modise is also being rejected and denied, because people say he is a mere person - they said that Christ also was a mere person. He (Modise) is the *Moemedi*, or the Holy Spirit.

Modise is not God - he is simply the overseer of the church. I also call him God's messenger, *Moemedi*, because he is the one who stands on your behalf for whatever sickness or problem you have. He is not the Holy Spirit, but is a person like us. We do not pray to him; we pray to God. Some of the things people say [about Modise] are not true.

There are at least some grounds for characterising the IPC as a 'messianic' church. The teaching in the church seems to indicate that although Modise is not Christ, he has taken the place of Christ, at least in the opinion of some ministers and members. There is actually no real place for the Holy Spirit in IPC theology. The references to the Holy Spirit in John 16 are consistently applied to Modise. The greeting repeated by the IPC faithful at every service: 'We thank God for Jesus; we thank Jesus for *Moemedi*' appears to accord Modise a place in the Trinity itself, whether consciously or not. But this is a subject for which there are no certain answers at present. There are many secrets in the church which outsiders are not permitted to know. When I asked in 1991 if our field worker could remain for the Friday night service, Modise said he could not, because he was not sick. Seven months later another field worker had to feign sickness in order to be admitted into the services at Silo. Modise also told us that God had revealed to him the meaning of the number 666 in the Book of Revelation, and that he alone knew the real name of God. Together with the 'Lord's Prayer' and the secret formula to be used by members, these things can be revealed only to the members. There are therefore some secrets which only the 'elect' may know. For these reasons there remains much mystery attached to this church and its leader, about which more research needs to be done. Nevertheless, the widespread belief by both church leaders and members that Modise has divine status and is in some way part of the Trinity has apparently not been effectively or actively repudiated in the IPC's preaching and practice. For these reasons, the IPC is the only church encountered during this current research in which the term 'messianic' might be appropriate.

3 CHRIST OR AN AFRICAN MESSIAH?

The so-called emphasis on the Holy Spirit has not resulted in a weak Christology for most of African Pentecostalism in South Africa. Christ is not relegated to the periphery in these churches, and there is certainly no conscious attempt to dethrone him from his rightful place. The Bible is the measuring rod by which most Pentecostal theology is conceived and continuously modified; for this reason church members bear witness to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ was expressed by many members of these churches in clear terms which did not indicate any Christological weakness. The honour that is given to

the heads of the churches must be understood in the African context only to mean respect for leaders, and it cannot usually be assumed that this has gone beyond traditional esteem. For this reason, most of the arguments for 'messianism' are unconvincing, and it is only in the IPC that they might be pertinent.

Martin (1975:171) modified her earlier harsh judgment on the ZCC and other 'messianic movements' with the following comments:

In the light of what we have observed among the Kirabanguists, 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.

This reminds us of Schreiter's (1985:158) observation:

the conversion process ... is much slower than we had first thought ... what appears to be syncretism ... may be but reflective of the stages in the conversion process ... the firm foundations we experience today were not easily achieved. No doubt they may have looked like a dangerous syncretism to an earlier generation.

What today may appear to be an aberration of Christianity or 'syncretism' from a 'foreign' perspective, may in fact be stages on the way to total conversion, a goal which Western Christianity itself has probably not yet attained. Anyone who tries to evaluate African phenomena from outside the cultural matrix in which those phenomena are found may be making 'foreign' evaluations which do not accurately account for the realities. To assume that the rapidly moving, fluid phenomenon of African Pentecostalism is static and in its final form is to start with a false premise. The issue of syncretism in African Pentecostalism will be discussed more fully later.

In view of these comments, it is doubtful whether the ZCC, or most African indigenous churches in Southern Africa for that matter, can today be termed 'messianic', or 'syncretistic' movements. We would be foolish to assume that the Holy Spirit is not working there, renewing these churches as churches of Jesus Christ. To be sure, the bishop is a most important figure in the ZCC, but he can hardly be said to have taken the place of Christ. Even when a deceased bishop appears to help or protect a ZCC member, or when the prophets mention these functions, it is understood to signify the guidance of God and not

that of the bishop; God is praised as a result. ZCC members do not pray to their bishops, living or dead, and this church cannot assuredly be said to have departed from 'orthodox' Christology.

The IPC, on the other hand, seems to be at least a movement on the way to **becoming** messianic. Modise's status in the church is clearly rising among his followers, as is evidenced in his title changing over the years from *Ntate* to *Moemedi*. One wonders whether his status will rise even further after his death. To many IPC members Modise has become a divine figure who stands as the 'Representative' of God. He has indeed taken the place of Christ in this church, at least in the perceptions of some of its members. He alone wields divine power to reveal and forgive sins; he alone has the power to heal sicknesses with his words; he alone knows the secrets of God and the mysterious divine name; to many he is in fact the Holy Spirit personified. For these reasons, I consider the IPC to be one of the closest examples that we have in South Africa of a truly 'messianic' movement.