

"WORLDS OF THE SPIRIT". EXPLORING AFRICAN SPIRITUAL AND NEW
PENTECOSTAL CHURCH RELATIONS IN BOTSWANA

by

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SUMMARY

Similar to other countries in southern Africa, the relationship between African Spiritual Churches and New Pentecostal Churches in Botswana has been characterized by considerable tension and mutual distrust. Although both movements highlight the third person of the Trinity, the Spirit of God, their followers view the world around them very differently. This study has investigated the relationship between these two types of churches by focusing on their efforts to produce unique ideologies of spiritual power in relation to the two major ideologies in the Botswana context, namely the reified Setswana worldview and the globalizing forces of Western modernity.

In order to provide a careful analysis of the relationship between these movements, two churches from each group were chosen as representatives. The Hermon Church and Revelation Blessed Peace Church served as examples for the African Spiritual Churches, while Goodnews Ministries and Bible Life Ministries were the New Pentecostal subjects. Primary research methods included interviews with church leadership, questionnaires for members of each church and participant observation. Church origins, biblical hermeneutics, healing and deliverance rituals, and approaches to cultures and covenants formed the key areas of study.

Creating unique “worlds of the Spirit” by means of innovative tactics, both types of churches seek to enable their followers to live well as they produce their contextualized ideologies of power. However, even though both movements lay claim to the Spirit of God as their source of power, the distinctive ideologies emerging from their sermons, technologies, rituals and symbols have brought them into conflict with one another. For African Spiritual Churches, the Spirit of God meets people in the midst of life’s struggles, providing healing and wholeness in all relationships. Their willingness to adopt certain elements of the reified Setswana worldview is a major issue in the conflict with New Pentecostal Churches. For New Pentecostals, the Spirit breaks all covenants made in the past, and empowers “born again” believers to succeed in a

modern environment filled with opportunities and challenges. The key missiological concern of this study is to explore the unique efforts of these movements to contextualize the gospel message for Botswana.

Key Terms:

African Spiritual Church; New Pentecostal Church; Botswana Culture; Contextualization; Ideology, Spiritual Power; Hermeneutics; Church Identity; Healing; Deliverance; Covenant; Witchcraft; Ritual, Symbolism, Pneumatology

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I declare that **“Worlds Of The Spirit”. Exploring African Spiritual And New Pentecostal Church Relations In Botswana** is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE
(REV J B Born)

DATE

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“The wind blows where it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (NIV).

John 3:8

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AIC - African Independent Church
- ASC - African Spiritual Church
- BLM - Bible Life Ministries
- GM - Goodnews Ministries
- HC - Hermon Church
- KJV - King James Version (Bible)
- NIV - New International Version (Bible)
- NPC - New Pentecostal Church
- RBP - Revelation Blessed Peace Church
- UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

All biblical references and quotations have been taken from the New International Version or the King James Version of the Bible as indicated within the text of the dissertation.

CHAPTER ONE

A COLLISION OF “WORLDS”

1.1 Introduction

The dry, landlocked country of Botswana is located right in the center of southern Africa. During my twelve years of mission service in this context, I often had occasion to attend the “prayer services” that are held in the homes of those who have been bereaved. These services have an established pattern whereby three or four well-known hymns are sung, and then a few people, usually older pastors, comment briefly on a passage of Scripture intended to focus on the sovereignty of God or perhaps to offer comfort at a time of sorrow. But, during the decade of the 1990’s, that pattern began to be challenged by young, Spirit-filled “born again” preachers who would stand up and call for the audience to repent and be saved before it is too late.

These impassioned sermons are usually tolerated by the audience but among the pastors there is an almost palpable sense that something is out of order. At times the young men are publicly rebuked for their impropriety, while most often the grumbling about these “new churches” takes place over the tea and scones that inevitably follow every “prayer service”. These relatively minor conflicts symbolize the much larger rift that exists between what I have chosen to call African Spiritual Churches (ASCs) and New Pentecostal Churches (NPCs).¹ It is this collision between churches that both claim to rely heavily upon the Spirit of God for their present day power and their original genesis that forms the locus of this thesis.

¹ See section 1.2.2 for a full discussion and explanation for the use of these terms. I am using the designation African Spiritual Church to describe those churches often referred to as AICs in the literature. The acronym AIC originally stood for African Independent Churches, but has also been used to stand for African Indigenous Churches, African Instituted Churches and now often refers to African Initiated Churches. New Pentecostal churches emphasize classic Pentecostal doctrines but also often have links to the international charismatic movement and tend to focus on the “prosperity” or “faith gospel” (see Marshall 1992:9-17).

This first part of this introductory chapter provides the rationale for my focus on the relationship between African Spiritual and New Pentecostal churches, and an overview of the Botswana context. The thorny question of proper nomenclature for the churches under discussion is also dealt with in this section. The second part of the chapter deals primarily with the central problem addressed by the research, the key hypotheses, critical missiological issues and an overview of my research methodology. It is my contention that this subject engages fundamental missiological themes such as ecumenism, contextualization of Christianity and even the very nature of the gospel message that claims to impact all areas of life.

The third and final section of this chapter develops an approach to studying and understanding the experience and language of power so important to these churches by reviewing pertinent literature dealing with relations of power, techniques and tactics, ideology and hegemony, coded resistance to domination, and the appropriation of foreign symbols and objects. This discussion of power will be critical for the analysis of the churches in chapters two through six where I will focus on the origins of these movements, their self-understanding in relation to the Spirit and power, their use of Scripture, their focus on healing and deliverance, and the manner in which they seek to negotiate the clash of Setswana and Western cultures.

1.2 Background To The Thesis

1.2.1 Rationale For Topic

Having been closely involved with ASC and NPC members during my twelve years of service in Botswana², it became quite obvious that even though both groups lay claim to the presence and power of the Spirit considerable tension exists between them. One way to illustrate this “contested space” (Kalu 2000a:123) is to note the various names they use to identify each other. In a rather telling fashion, it is common

² Sent to Botswana in 1992 under the auspices of the Africa Inter Mennonite Mission and Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services International, my wife and I were primarily engaged in the areas of biblical and theological education, leadership development and HIV/AIDS ministries among African Spiritual Churches until we returned to Canada in 2004.

to hear Batswana³ denigrate NPCs with the following descriptions: *dikereke tsa makwerekwere*, churches of African foreigners (a very pejorative term used to denigrate the African expatriate leadership of these churches); *dikereke tsa sekgoa*, English-speaking churches (English being the primary language); *dikereke tsa ditie*, churches of neckties (a tongue-in-cheek jibe at the NPC penchant for dressing expensively for church services) and finally, *dikereke tsa pholoso*, churches of salvation (on account of the NPC emphasis on the need to be “born again” or saved).⁴

On the other hand, the way NPC members speak about ASCs is even more contentious. Terms such as *dikereke tsa metsi*, water churches (a derogatory reference to the ASC practice of using water in various rituals) as well as much more sinister descriptions are common: *dikereke tsa bosigo*, night churches (on account of their all night services); *dikereke tsa sephiri*, secret churches (because of the esoteric nature of some ASC activities); and the most damning of all, *dikereke tsa madaemone*, churches of demons. Although both groups identify themselves as people of the Spirit, given this level of mutual distrust, it seems somewhat incongruous to force them into the same camp.

As I worked with and grew to know many individuals who identified with these groups, my admiration and respect for their contributions to the communities they served grew immensely. On various occasions, our mission agency, Africa Inter Mennonite Mission, helped organize events that brought leaders of these groups together in order to see how we could best address the challenges facing the country, especially in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. A certain level of cooperation was achieved but it was obvious that considerable suspicion and mistrust remained. In a desire to promote greater understanding and appreciation of the contributions of both

³ Batswana is the plural form for the people of the country of Botswana, whereas Motswana refers to a single citizen. The national language is Setswana, and the official language is English.

⁴ Although this final term can be viewed positively I have most often heard it in a manner implying that NPCs are arrogant and exclusivist (as in, “They think they are the only ones who are saved!”).

church groups, I decided to undertake a study that would compare their understanding and approaches to key areas of faith, life and culture.⁵

Along with my close personal interest in these churches, I have also been keenly aware of the amazing impact of those churches that emphasize the person, power and work of the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, on the African ecclesiastical landscape during the 20th century. Allan Anderson (2004a:103) has gone so far to proclaim that “the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements undoubtedly are fast becoming dominant forms of Christianity on the continent”. If this is the case, then the identity and self-understanding of these groups must be a primary concern for those interested in the future of Christianity in Africa. Moreover, Anderson’s use of the terms “Pentecostal” and Charismatic” are illustrative of the problem I am seeking to address, for he is consciously including those churches known as African Spiritual Churches within the movements he describes. But whether African Pentecostals are willing to embrace ASCs, or whether ASCs want to be considered Pentecostal is a very debatable issue.

Considerable historical research has been done to unearth the origins of the ASC movement at the turn of the 20th century and their connections to Pentecostal⁶ groups from outside Africa (Sundkler 1976:13-67; Anderson 1992:20-32). Starting from rather humble beginnings, ASCs have grown substantially, and spread all over sub-Saharan Africa. Although their numbers are difficult to verify, at the dawn of the new millennium it was suggested that there were at least 55 million ASC members in 10,000 distinct

⁵ Various Mennonite mission agencies have intentionally worked with African Spiritual Churches over the past 40 years in numerous countries throughout the African continent. Much of this effort has been spent in the areas of theological education, leadership development, youth work and community development. Considerable research has been conducted resulting in a number of books and articles (see E & I Weaver 1975; Nussbaum 1984; Shank 1987; Shank 1991). At present, the best historical account of the agency I worked with, the Africa Inter Mennonite Mission, and their ministry with ASCs is provided by Jim Bertsche (1998:443-590).

⁶ The older or “classic” Pentecostal churches most often focussed on spiritual rebirth, baptism of the Holy Spirit (accompanied by speaking in tongues), healing, holiness and the second coming of Christ.

denominations spread throughout all 60 African nations (Barrett 2000:43).⁷ Whatever their exact size, the importance of the ASC movement can not be questioned. David Bosch once suggested that ASCs should be regarded as the most remarkable new development in the world-wide history of Christianity: “Few students of the African religious scene today would doubt the importance and the significance – also for the future of Christianity on this continent – of the African Independent Churches. These churches ... may indeed be seen as the fifth major church type, after the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Reformation, and the Pentecostal churches” (in Daneel 1987:9). With regard to Botswana, the locus of this study, the prominent place of ASCs is well-established with at least 375 ASC denominations registered with the Botswana government (Republic of Botswana 2004:4543-4554).⁸

Paul Gifford (1998:324-25) has suggested that the ASC movement reached its zenith in the 1960's, around the time that many African nations achieved their Independence from colonial powers. Although one could dispute that claim, especially in the case of South Africa, it does appear that the ASC growth rate did seem to level off in the final decades of the previous century. At the same time, a new “Spirit” movement arose which has been characterized by its aggressive evangelism, promise of power and prosperity and its focus on deliverance from evil powers. These New Pentecostal Churches have witnessed tremendous growth and have now become permanent fixtures in almost all the major urban centres in Africa and are rapidly spreading into the

⁷ In a different publication, Barrett (Barrett, Kurian & Johnson 2001:13) provides a figure of over 83 million “Independents”. Later Barrett et al. (:20) use a figure of 65 million “African indigenous pentecostals/charismatics” under the main heading of “Neocharismatics”. Barrett’s use of these terms provides another example of the problem that this project seeks to address.

⁸ The actual number of ASCs as compared to new Pentecostals in Botswana is extremely hard to gauge because of the way Barrett and others (e.g., Johnstone & Mandryk 2001:117) have combined figures for ASCs and NPCs under the heading “neocharismatic,” “charismatic” or “independent”. Barrett (Barrett, Kurien & Johnstone 2001:126) gives a combined figure of 535,000 Pentecostals/Charismatics (33% of the total population) of which 498,000 are “Independents”. Johnstone and Mandryk (2001:117) do not distinguish among the groups at all and give a slightly higher figure of 619,000 “Charismatics” (38% of the total population).

rural areas as well (Ojo 1995:115; Gifford 1998:33).⁹ Even though this movement is still rather young, over 100 of these churches and ministries have already registered in Botswana, the context for this study (Republic of Botswana 2004:4543-4554).

1.2.2 Nomenclature

The previous section has already highlighted the importance of a careful consideration of nomenclature, particularly in relation to the self-understanding of insiders, the very people who attend these churches. In the Introduction I simply noted my preference for the terms African Spiritual Churches (ASC) and New Pentecostal Churches (NPC). Before going any further it is necessary to discuss these designations more fully, and explain why I have not used the more common AIC acronym. With regard to the term, AIC, Dawid Venter (2004:15-28) has provided a most helpful discussion of its history, usage and significance. He notes that while there is consensus regarding the usage of AIC as a description, there has been considerable debate on whether the “I” should refer to independent, indigenous, initiated or instituted. Following Stephen Hayes, Venter (2004:25) attempts to synthesize all four descriptors into a definition:

An African Independent Church (AIC) is a grouping established for religious purposes associated with Christianity in Africa by Africans for Africans, which remains independent of groupings outside Africa for funding, leadership or control—even should it affiliate to bodies that include non-Africans.

In addition, Venter discusses other terms often used in southern Africa to describe the various types of AICs, especially the well-known trio of Ethiopian, Apostolic and Zionist introduced by Bengt Sundkler (1961:53-55) along with the additional contribution of “Spirit-type” from Inus Daneel (1987:39-41).¹⁰

⁹ Barrett, Kurien and Johnson (2001:13) provide a figure of just over 126 million Pentecostals/Charismatics in Africa.

¹⁰ For more discussion of the AIC typologies from a variety of perspectives, see Turner 1965a, 1967; Anderson 1992:2-6; 2001b:108-110, and Kalu 2000a. These additional descriptions are notoriously difficult to use consistently. For example, in Botswana, most ASCs, even those with Zion in their church name, identify themselves as Apostolic (*MaApostole*). The term Zionist (*MaSione*) tends to be reserved for members of the large Zion Christian Church.

Interestingly, midway through Venter's discussion (2004:22-23), he notes the difficulties of trying to describe a multi-faceted movement as an outsider. Years earlier, Harold Turner (1976:13) explained this problem well: "our approach to any range of phenomena is both revealed and influenced by the names we bestow upon it". Venter's response to this issue is to call for a more intense effort to standardize the terminology before a comprehensive theory can be developed. In effect, he is arguing that researchers need to do a better job of "naming" the churches within these movements (2004:39). Although I see some value in this effort, I believe outsiders would be better served by listening to the self-descriptions provided by insider participants. Venter (2004:39) is not oblivious to this reality as he himself notes that "in the manner of grounded theory, categories are needed that depend more on empirical evidence of *the perceptions and experiences of AIC participants themselves than on the judgment of researchers* (emphasis mine)." The term AIC, along with most of the other monikers used to describe these churches, arose from the observations of outsiders. But instead of imposing their deduced monolithic descriptions upon these groups, researchers need to recognize their self-perceived identities. This inductive approach will likely lead to a greater number of typologies but this does not have to be viewed in negative terms.¹¹

Especially in light of my concern to explore issues related to self-perception and creating identities, I have consciously chosen to use the self-chosen moniker of these churches, *dikereke tsa semoya*, Spiritual churches (hereafter ASC), to describe those churches in Botswana that researchers would most likely identify as AICs. As will become clear, this self-designation is particularly apt in light of their theology and practice. During the years I worked together with them in Botswana, that is how they consistently identified themselves, and it is how I will refer to them in this dissertation.

¹¹ Although drawn from a somewhat different context, I would argue that Maluleke's (2000b:58) comments about African Theology in general are applicable to this specific discussion: "Contrary to previous expectations and predictions, the future is not ONE but MANY. It is therefore in the explosion of variety, nuance and ambiguity and not in the comfort of mono-paradigms that African agency must be sought and constructed".

The previous discussion in relation to ASCs could be reproduced when discussing NPCs. Although this movement is considerably younger, here too a variety of names have been used to describe these churches: Pentecostal, charismatic, “born agains”, neo-pentecostal, or even “gospel of prosperity churches”. Although “Pentecostal” is the preferred description of many, some take issue with its use as an all-encompassing description of the movement. Oskarsson (1999:405-418) has provided a convincing argument that the emphasis these new churches place on the prosperity gospel¹² and deliverance ministries distinguishes them from the historic or “classic” Pentecostal churches which focused on spiritual rebirth, healing, baptism of the Holy Spirit, tongues (*glossalalia*) and the second coming of Christ.

One of the more innovative attempts to type Pentecostal churches and ASCs has been that of South African scholar Allan Anderson. He originally proposed that three groups of churches be brought together under the heading “African Pentecostal”: Pentecostal mission churches (historic Pentecostal churches), independent African Pentecostal churches (those of much more recent origin) and finally the largest group, Indigenous Pentecostal-type churches (AICs or Spiritual churches) (1992:2-12). After receiving criticism for his overly simplistic attempt to unify these highly divergent bodies under the Pentecostal umbrella¹³, he (2001b:109-110) responded by slightly, but significantly, modifying his typology. He now argues that “Spiritual/Prophet-Healing” churches and “Newer Pentecostal/Charismatic” churches should be more carefully distinguished from one another but still brought under the heading “African Initiated Churches”. Except for dropping the designation “charismatic”, I have chosen to follow Anderson’s use of the term “new Pentecostal” as most of these bodies uphold the historic doctrines of Pentecostalism and refer to themselves as Pentecostal.

¹² The prosperity gospel is also referred to as the “Faith movement.” This movement began in America and is characterized by a radical emphasis on a positive confession of faith in order to receive all the blessings of Christ. Gifford (1998:39) describes it well: “According to the Faith Gospel, God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ, and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness and poverty.” For a full and rather critical discussion of the Faith movement, see Horn (1989) and Gifford (1993:146-189).

¹³ His effort has been described as an effort to “colonize” the ASC movement on behalf of Pentecostalism (Venter 2004:21).

Nevertheless they can be distinguished from the “older” bodies on account of their later origins, their African “roots” (i.e., founded by Africans) and their distinctive emphasis on deliverance ministries and prosperity teaching. For these reasons, I have adopted the term New Pentecostal churches (NPC) when describing these churches.

Before concluding this section, I want to acknowledge that my use of the description NPC could easily expose me to the critique I employed when discussing the term AIC, namely, that of imposing my categories onto an existing body. In fact, during the course of this study I discovered that I was beginning to succumb to this precise temptation when I began to resist using the very term, “revivalist,” that Goodnews Ministries, my primary example of an NPC, employs to describe their type of church. Their self-designation did not “fit” my typology but it does describe a key aspect of their vision, goals and self-perception. My secondary example, Bible Life Ministries, also deviates slightly from the NPC mold by describing themselves as “a charismatic, non-denominational and Christ-centered ministry”. Unlike the ASCs, NPCs do not yet have a term that they can agree upon. That being the case, I will use the moniker NPC, while being careful to describe as fully as possible what these churches mean when employing their self-descriptions. To do anything less would demonstrate a lack of respect for their unique characteristics.

1.2.3 Botswana In Context

Over the course of this study it will become increasingly clear that the fundamental changes that have taken place in Botswana society have had a major impact on the formation and development of the churches being discussed. For this reason I am providing a brief overview of the Botswana context at the outset. Over the past forty years, the country of Botswana has emerged as an unexpected African success story, due to its well-deserved reputation for democratic government and economic development. When Botswana achieved Independence from Britain on 30 September 1966, it was considered one of the poorest countries in the world, dependent upon foreign aid while surrounded by racist white regimes. With an

economy that was heavily reliant on agriculture, recurrent droughts wreaked havoc on the population. Colonial policies created a situation whereby Botswana served as a cheap labour reserve for South Africa, and the country was highly dependent upon the cash remittances of record numbers of men working in South African mines (over 32,000 in 1966). Transport and communication infrastructure was almost non-existent beyond the north-south railway line, and educational facilities were in their infancy with few schools and a dearth of trained teachers. Seventy five per cent of the population was considered illiterate and only 40 Batswana held university degrees (Republic of Botswana 1966b:3-8,15,41; Republic of Botswana 2005:13).

From those rather humble beginnings the country has made remarkable progress due to the sound management of the wealth generated by its diamond deposits. Over the first three decades of its existence as an independent nation, Botswana achieved the distinction of having the fastest growing economy in the world with an average annual growth rate of nearly 9% and is now classified as an upper middle-income country (World Bank 2008; Hope 2002:1). This economic growth has had a huge impact on the general population. During the period of 1966 to 1999, life expectancy rose from 46 years to 67.5 years due to expanding access to public health services and improvements in incomes and nutrition. From 1981 to 1999, the infant mortality rate fell from 71 per thousand live births to 38 and adult literacy rose from 34% to 75%. The transformation is also evident in infrastructure such as tarred roads, up from 7 kilometers in 1966 to 6,872 in 2002 (UNDP 2005:15).

While there is much to celebrate since Independence, this nation of approximately 1.8 million people still faces major concerns. Chief among them are the great disparity between rich and poor (third worst in the world), high unemployment (officially at around 20% but unofficially estimated as closer to 40%), and the second highest rate of HIV/AIDS infection in the world at 24% of the entire population (World Bank 2008; UNDP 2005:17-22). The transition from a primarily rural, agriculture based economy to a much more urban, industrial manner of living has been rapid, and both liberating as well as traumatic for many Batswana. Seymour Patterson (2006:13),

drawing on the work of the anthropologist Isaac Schapera (1941), describes Setswana life in the early decades of the 20th century:

The people of traditional Botswana society were self-sufficient in many ways. They depended on the land for their survival and produced their own food; they used resources from the land to build their own homes. The produce of the land shaped their eating habits, and their diet consisted of sorghum porridge, milk, the meat of wild and domestic animals, vegetable dishes made from both crops and wild plants.... The social arrangement or compact, provided that every village member worked to care for himself, his relatives, his neighbors and the chief.

Colonialism, migrant labour, urbanism, technology, and education have all significantly impacted this former way of life.

One can gain some significant insights into how Botswana have coped with these rapid changes by considering the literary efforts of Unity Dow, who has emerged as a powerful commentator on the social challenges created by the clash of Western forces and Setswana culture. Dow, who is also Botswana's first and only female High Court judge, was initially noteworthy for her efforts as a human rights lawyer. But in 2000 she released her first literary effort, *Far and Beyond*. Writing a coming-of-age novel that dealt with sexual abuse perpetrated by a teacher, family members with AIDS and witchcraft accusations among friends, she immediately made it obvious that she was unafraid to deal with challenging social realities. Her second novel, *The Screaming of the Innocent*, was even more hard-hitting as she dealt with the incredibly horrific crime of child ritual murder in gruesome detail. By describing the use of ancient practices juxtaposed against the modern lust for power and wealth, she exposed the underbelly of modern Botswana life.

The topics covered in Dow's first two books are of great importance for this study because ASCs and NPCs are all trying to come to terms with the realities of modern life. Greater wealth, HIV/AIDS, increased education, the breakdown of the family, new technologies, witchcraft, urbanism and unemployment are important aspects of present-day Botswana. However it is Dow's third novel, *Juggling Truths* (2004), which most directly addresses one of the key issues dealt with in this study – the effort to resolve the clash of Setswana and Western cultures. In her book, she describes the life of a

young girl growing up in Botswana in the 1960's. This child is faced with the monumental task of trying to make sense of the competing truth claims presented by her loving grandparents, the strict school teacher and a moralistic priest. Like the country as whole, she learns that different answers are required for different contexts, and that reconciling Setswana ways with modern realities is not a simple task, but one that often forces Batswana to take sides in an ideological struggle.

1.3 Hypothesis And Research Methodology

1.3.1 Statement Of The Problem

As stated above, the distinctive identities of those African churches that choose to focus on the person and work of the Holy Spirit is an issue needing further study. For example, it is highly problematic that Barrett (2001:20) and others (Burgess & Van der Maas 2002:xx) have simply chosen to include ASCs under the heading "neocharismatics" or "third wave charismatics". Even though this practice has become commonplace, it is highly questionable on theological, sociological and historical grounds. According to Stanley Burgess, neocharismatics are normally viewed as the "third wave" of Pentecostalism that arose in the 1980's after the "first wave" of classical Pentecostalism (early decades of the 20th century) and the "second wave" of charismatic renewal of the 1960's (Burgess & Van der Maas 2002:928). It is surprising then that Barrett, a scholar who is well aware of the historical origins of the ASC movement (1968), would simply conflate the membership figures of ASCs with the many other independent Holy Spirit-focused charismatic movements that have arisen in the past thirty years.

A brief perusal of the literature discussing the relationship between ASCs and Pentecostalism illustrates the development of this line of thinking. Already in 1963, Harold Turner described ASCs as "non-Western varieties of the worldwide Pentecostal movement" (:116). Another prominent researcher, Walter Hollenweger, was the first to refer to ASCs as "independent African Pentecostal" churches (1972:149). Following their lead, Paul Pomerville (1985:xii), in his study of the worldwide spread of

Pentecostal missions, argued strongly that “African Independent Churches, for the most part, represent indigenous Pentecostal movements”. Then in 1992, Allan Anderson made his first full defense of the term, “indigenous Pentecostal-type churches” (1992:2-6), as a description of those churches previously described as ASCs. One final example is that of Harvey Cox who argued that “African independent churches constitute the African expression of the worldwide pentecostal movement” on account of both their style and origins (1995:246). Barrett’s inclusion of ASCs under the Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal banner simply reflects the position scholars have adopted vis-à-vis ASCs and the Pentecostal movement.

This broad consensus has been challenged by a Nigerian Pentecostal scholar, Ogbu Kalu (2000a, 2000b). Kalu argues that ASC studies have too often been undertaken by social scientists instead of theologians.¹⁴ His assessment (2000a:123) of these scholars, including some of those mentioned above, is harsh:

Universalism, one-world-ism, globalism are undercurrents in this mushy, reductionist approach. The predominance of Western sociologists, coming from cultural contexts which advocate inclusiveness and religious pluralism, has befuddled the study of both the Aladura [ASC movement] and Pentecostalism. They ride rough-shod over distinctions which matter to the practitioners.

According to Kalu, scholars have been mistaken in their attempt to harmonize the groups in light of the fundamental differences that exist in both their theology and practice, especially in the areas of Christology, pneumatology and covenantal theology. Although agreeing with a number of the issues raised by Kalu, I argue that his narrow focus on theological differences needs to be broadened to include the ideological conflict between these movements as they attempt to enable their followers to adapt to a changing context. The resulting “collision of worlds” is the product of two distinct ways of both understanding and employing the power of the Spirit in relation to a reified Setswana culture and modernizing Western forces. From this viewpoint, an

¹⁴ It seems Kalu might actually be judging social scientists too harshly as most of his critique seems more related to theological issues than sociological concerns. One good example of a social scientist raising questions about the way many have equated the ASC experience with African Pentecostalism is Garner 2004b:203-204.

examination of not just theological differences but historical, sociological and cultural distinctives becomes critical.

Therefore, the problem that this study seeks to address concerns the unique identities of the ASC and NPC movements in Botswana with especial attention given to their creation of ideological “worlds of the Spirit” designed to empower their followers. The weakness in past analyses of the relationship between these movements has been the rather uncritical willingness to equate the “Spirit and power” language employed by these churches, without thoroughly exploring their origins, self-understandings, rituals, symbols, hermeneutics and approaches to both Setswana and Western influences. I will attempt to rectify this analytical vacuum by intentionally exploring and delineating the key features of the ideological “worlds” created by both of these movements.

1.3.2 Hypothesis

Based on the discussion above, the problem addressed within this study concerns the distinctive ideological identities of African Spiritual Churches and New Pentecostal Churches in relationship to one another, and the Botswana context. Once the shape and character of the ideologies propounded and enacted in these two movements is delineated, the reasons for their antagonistic relationship will emerge more clearly. Even though both groups emphasize the power of the Spirit, appear to have similar experiences and often use the same terminology, the data will demonstrate that it is a mistake to identify them as a single entity. In the course of this study I will employ the theoretical insights concerning power promulgated by a variety of philosophers and sociologists to illustrate the manner in which these churches seek to provide their followers with an ideology that empowers them to find their way in a world full of perplexing challenges.

The preoccupation with power found within these movements is best understood in relation to the various forces at work within the Botswana context during the past century. Experiencing the Spirit of God in ways that radically transformed their lives and

their understanding of the world around them has led the founders of both these types of churches to develop unique “worlds of the Spirit” as a means to navigate the confusing mix of traditional/modern, local/global, and Setswana/Western influences. Even though both groups lay claim to the Spirit of God as their source of power, the distinctive ideologies emerging from their sermons, rituals and symbols have brought them into conflict with one another, leading to significant misunderstandings. For ASCs, the Spirit is a the healer, comforter and reconciler – the one who helps fulfill African aspirations for wholeness in all relationships even in the face of great difficulties. For NPCs, the Spirit is viewed in terms designed to inspire confidence in the face of both opportunity and challenge: dynamic power for success, conqueror over Satan and the solution to life’s problems. For both groups, there exists a close relationship between their ideology of spiritual power and the signs, symbols and technologies employed to create and sustain their unique understanding of the world. Therefore, by examining their ideologies or “worlds of the Spirit” as found in their origins, their ability to create a self-identity, their use of the Bible, their employ of healing and deliverance ritual, as well as their tactical approach to Setswana and Western cultural influences, the reasons for the rift in the relationship between ASCs and NPCs in Botswana will become more evident.

1.3.3 Missiological Issues

Missiology as a discipline is fundamentally concerned with the communication of the gospel and the advance of the reign of God on earth. It is the critical and analytical study of the interplay between mission and Christian theology. I identify closely with the definition of missiology provided by Orlando Costas (in Escobar 2001:54):

Missiology has to do with the witnessing engagement of Christians in the concrete situations of life. It is a critical reflection that takes place in their praxis of mission. It is an analytical interpretation, evaluation, and projection of the meaning, effectiveness, obstacles, and possibilities of the communication of the Gospel to the world. Missiology is the handmaid of mission, but mission is not always missiological. Mission becomes missiological when it is accompanied by a process of critical reflection.

When engaging in the missiological task, the emphasis is placed on both context (“the concrete situations of life”) and text (“the communication of the gospel”). This is the challenge of contextualization (Bevans 1992:11; Bosch 1991:425).¹⁵ In addition it is important to note the missional imperative to advance the reign of God on earth. In the past, Christians have often identified the kingdom or reign of God with the church but a new appreciation for the mission of God, *missio Dei*, has led to a greater conviction that it is the triune God who drives mission, not the church.

In this examination of both ASCs and NPCs, it will be demonstrated that in their desire to enable individuals to deal with the challenges of life by means of the power and presence of the Spirit, they have often surged ahead of many other churches. Too often Christians have separated evangelism (spiritual salvation for the afterlife) from social action (enabling people to experience a better life in the present). These churches have understood that the mission of God deals with all aspects of life. In much of their theology and practice, they demonstrate an affinity with David Bosch (1991:399) who argued that Christians must “minister to people in their *total* need, that we should involve individual as well as society, soul *and* body, present *and* future in our ministry of salvation”. These churches provide solid examples of holistic mission efforts.

Furthermore, while these churches are firmly focused on the third member of the Trinity, the Spirit, their view of mission must also be seen in relation to the Father and Son. As will be demonstrated, both of these groups have a strong commitment to carrying out mission after the model of Jesus as found in Luke 4:18-19:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. (NIV)

¹⁵ Bevans (1992:1) has defined contextual theology “as a way of doing theology in which one takes into account: the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the Christian people; the culture in which one is theologizing; and social change in that culture, whether brought about by western technological process or the grass-roots struggle for equality, justice and liberation.” It is an effort that takes seriously the gospel of Jesus Christ, human culture and socio-historical realities (see Bosch 1991:420-432; and Whiteman 1997:2-7).

In this passage Jesus reveals his own awareness that he had been sent by God and empowered by the Spirit to preach good news, proclaim liberty, heal the sick and set free the oppressed. Using this text as a paradigm, Saayman (1991:6) has identified three key dimensions in the *missio Dei*: “an evangelising dimension; a healing dimension; and a dimension of striving for social, political and economic justice”. Jesus came to enact the Biblical concept of *shalom*, which encompasses a whole range of meaning including wholeness, justice, righteousness, blessing and liberation. With this understanding of mission, the church serves as participant in God’s mission or as God’s instrument of salvation, liberation and unification of all humanity; in short, a sign of God’s action in establishing his reign on earth (Bosch 1991:373-74). I will return to this theme in the final chapter in an effort to consider the degree to which both ASCs and NPCs fulfill this role in Botswana.

Returning to the missiological concern for the interplay of text and context, it seems that for all who are concerned with questions surrounding the contextualization or inculturation¹⁶ of the gospel message, the phenomenal growth of these churches demands serious consideration. As will be demonstrated, although both these types of church pray to the triune God, call on help from the Spirit, preach from the Bible and face similar challenges, their views regarding Setswana and Western culture diverge significantly. How important for gospel communication is it to read the Bible, pray and worship in an imported language, English, instead of Setswana? Closely related, one has to ask what to make of the almost wholesale rejection, even demonization, of certain aspects of Setswana culture including veneration of ancestors and traditional medicine found in NPCs? At the same time, the willingness to persist in certain beliefs and practices arising from their Setswana past has raised questions regarding inappropriate contextualization within ASCs.

¹⁶ Pedro Arrupe, former superior general of the Jesuits, provided a helpful definition of inculturation: “Inculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about ‘a new creation’” (in Moreau 2000:474-475).

Questions of contextualization highlight issues of identity, worldview and culture change. Earlier generations of Western missionaries also challenged various aspects of Setswana culture (Dube 1999b:38-42), and so with their talk of spiritual power, Satan, evil spirits and demonization of the ancestors, are the NPCs in any way venturing onto new ground? With their persistent call to be “born again” and “to make a clean break with the past,” are they re-shaping the meaning of conversion and salvation in the Botswana context? When the ASCs burst upon the scene, they also challenged the established traditions of the mission or mainline churches with their radical call to incorporate various aspects of Setswana spirituality into their life and worship. Are they now a spent force, no longer able to relate to a drastically new and changed context?

From this brief overview, the missiological issues raised by this study become readily apparent. The rapid growth and widespread influence of both these groups requires critical reflection. Although it appears that NPCs have overtaken the older ASCs as the fastest growing churches in the country of Botswana, it is clear that both groups exercise considerable influence. They are active in mission, and aggressively spreading their message wherever they go. A clearer understanding of both what unites as well as what separates them may provide a way forward for both groups as they seek to address the many challenges of mission in the 21st century. My intention in the following chapters is to explore these questions and demonstrate how these groups have used their Spirit-dependent ideologies to both shape their lives and respond to the challenges present within the Botswana context. The methodology employed to reach that conclusion is described below.

1.3.4 Research Methods

1.3.4.1 Research Approach

1.3.4.1.1 An Eclectic Process

In this dissertation I am proposing to compare and contrast one ASC, the Hermon Church, and one NPC, Goodnews Ministries, in Botswana in order to keep the project manageable. By focusing on these two churches as my primary examples, my

intention is to obtain a clear understanding of their beliefs and practices. I am convinced that while larger studies are useful in that they provide a broad view of a larger phenomenon, they can at times suffer from a lack of depth and confuse issues in their attempts to harmonize opposing views. However, in a desire to provide a somewhat broader perspective, I will also draw upon findings from an additional ASC, Revelation Blessed Peace Church, and one other NPC, Bible Life Ministries.

The two ASCs, Hermon Church and Revelation Blessed Peace, were chosen on account of my long association with members of these churches in a variety of contexts within Botswana. Based on considerable interaction with a large number of ASCs, they seemed to be reasonably representative. In addition, both of these churches were founded in Botswana, and have not expanded beyond its borders. My choice of the two NPCs, Goodnews Ministries and Bible Life Ministries, was based on more objective criteria. I was looking to study church bodies that had existed for some time (both are over 15 years old), were started in Botswana and exhibited significant growth.

My methodology is eclectic in that I have sought to incorporate three perspectives by a variety of means: (1) the local community perception, (2) the perception of others involved in the phenomenon, (3) and the perception of scholars who have studied the phenomenon carefully (Bate 1998:160). In order to gain these three perspectives I have drawn information from a variety of sources. This has included extensive participant observation¹⁷ as well as the study of sermons, testimonies, teaching materials, tracts, songs and hymns, prayers and prophetic utterances. In addition I conducted interviews and administered a questionnaire to church members in order to gain answers to specific questions. Finally, I sought to

¹⁷ In the process of my research I have realized that although I may attempt to gain a look inside ('emic'), I will always remain somewhat of an outsider ('etic'). However, like Cox (1995:181), I would argue that this stance – “being a ‘sympathetic outsider’ and a ‘critical participant’” - may actually shed some valuable light on these movements. More will be said on the drawbacks of participant observation under 1.3.4.3.

draw upon the insights of others who have researched and commented on both of these types of churches.¹⁸

An important element of my research methodology is the inclusion of songs, hymns, testimonies and prayers in the analysis.¹⁹ ASCs and NPCs have an oral or narrative theology that is built upon an immediate personal experience of the Spirit. Hollenweger (1986:10) makes the point emphatically:

But one thing is sure: for them the medium of communication is, just as in biblical times, not the definition but the description, not the statement but the story, not the doctrine but the testimony, not the book but the parable, not a systematic theology but a song, not the treatise but the television programme, not the articulation of concepts but the celebration of banquets.

By involving the whole person spiritually, emotionally and physically in community worship, both of these groups are tapping into a deep human need, into what Harvey Cox has called “primal spirituality” (1995:81). It seems to me that at times analyzing these groups is more art than science, and yet as Cox (2000:12) argues elsewhere it is an extremely important task: “Knowing the gods and demons of a people and listening to their prayers and curses tells is more about them than all the statistics and case histories we could ever compile”.

1.3.4.1.2 Field Work And Questionnaires

There is a sense in which I could argue that my field work began the day I first started interacting with ASC members in July 1992. Obviously I did not begin to collect empirical data at that point but my experiences and the relationships formed with both ASC and NPC followers has shaped my personal life as well as my missiological understandings in profound ways. While this certainly has potential pitfalls in terms of maintaining objectivity in the collection and analysis of research (Maluleke 1996c:32-

¹⁸ The research method I employed appears to be increasing in popularity among those examining ASCs and NPCs in Africa (e.g., Gifford 1993:4-5 and Garner 2004a:63-64) and Europe (e.g., Coleman 2000:14). Maluleke (1996c) provides an extensive discussion of past methods used to research ASCs in South Africa.

¹⁹ Piet Naudé (1995) attempted to study the narrative dimension of an ASC by analyzing their hymns. On a much smaller scale, I have attempted to follow his example.

35), I believe the benefits far outweigh the risks. Allan Anderson (1995:283) has challenged researchers to demonstrate greater levels of engagement with Africans because their Christianity demands “personal participation and commitment” (also Maluleke 1996c:42). In addition Anderson argues (1995:285) that “all research into a new religious movement must begin with honest and humble attention and a willingness to be absorbed in learning about the movement for a long period of time before making evaluations”. I strongly endorse this methodological position, and have sought to engage my ASC and NPC friends as fully as possible.

However I also realize the need for the collection of empirical data. Having had extensive experience with ASCs previously, I found it necessary to immerse myself deliberately in the NPC milieu. To do so, I initially spent the first five months of 2002 participating in numerous NPC church services, crusades and prayer meetings. During this period I focused my attentions on Bible Life Ministries, while also spending great lengths of time with the members of Goodnews Ministries. My deliberate field research expanded in scope in January 2003 through to March 2004, when I visited Goodnews Ministries, the Hermon Church and Revelation Blessed Peace Church on numerous occasions in an effort to gather extensive information as a participant observer. After departing for Canada in March 2004, I returned to Botswana in June-July 2005 and July 2007, spending considerable time in interviews and various church services. I also interviewed a number of church leaders and was able to distribute and collect a number of questionnaires (see below). In addition, for varying lengths of time during 2003-05, and depending on the particular church, designated individuals have taken extensive notes of the church services.

In addition to field work, I prepared a Questionnaire (Appendix 1) that allowed me to explore some specific aspects of the theology and practice of these churches. Based on the content of the Questionnaire, Structured Interviews were conducted with the leadership of each church. In all four of the churches, nine or more pastors and church leaders were interviewed in this manner. The Questionnaire was prepared for the general membership of these congregations with the goal of hearing the views of

“ordinary members”.²⁰ The questionnaires were completed at various times between 2002 and 2005. Depending on the church, between 20 and 50 questionnaires were completed by each congregation represented in the study.

1.3.4.2 Assumptions

There are three key assumptions underlying the methodology of this dissertation. The first assumption is that the historical context from which these churches have arisen provides important information concerning the growth of this movement. I am in agreement with Cox (2000:11) who is convinced “that religious movements can never be understood apart from the cultural and political milieu in which they arise”. In addition, when dealing with contextual issues, both the distinctive internal characteristics of these churches and the external cultural and socio-historical factors in Botswana need to be explored simultaneously in order to determine how they impinge upon one another (Droogers 2001:41). These groups need to be seen as active agents in their interaction with the Botswana context, not merely as movements that meekly react to the events going on around them.

Finally I have assumed that the people I interviewed and those who filled out the questionnaires answered honestly. The danger certainly exists that some may have answered questions in a manner they thought would please the church leadership or myself. I have a personal relationship with many of those who were interviewed as well as with those who filled out the Questionnaire. Eric Anum (2001:112-115) has rightly pointed out the issues surrounding a power imbalance that exists between white middle class researchers and the membership of African congregations. To try and eliminate this problem, church members who filled out the questionnaire were not asked to provide their names. In addition, throughout the process of gathering information for this project, I have been in regular contact with the leaders and various members of the

²⁰ A considerable body of literature has arisen surrounding the interaction between “ordinary” and “trained” readers of the Bible (for example, see the various contributions in Getui et al 2001, Ukpong et al. 2002 and GO West 2002b).

churches studied. I have provided them with progress reports and discussed my findings with them in order to clarify my perceptions of the various subjects. At points our perceptions and analyses of the issues have not been in agreement. Where this is the case, I have indicated this within the text of the dissertation.

1.3.4.3 Challenges

Previously I have raised the issue of objectivity in relation to my extended contact and relationships with members of the churches being researched (1.3.4.1.1). Maluleke (1996c:41) has rightly observed that often “researchers try hard to persuade us that they are letting the sources speak for themselves, when their own voices are actually drowning the sources”. To a certain extent I am sure that this, too, has taken place in this study. I designed the questionnaire, quoted from the interviews what I believed was most pertinent and I was the one determining what was most significant in the numerous services I attended. How to overcome this danger is a serious issue. In addition, the oral nature of these churches also confronts the observer immediately with the issue of how to analyze these groups. There has been a growing awareness of the power imbalance that exists when a “trained reader” enters a community of “untrained ordinary readers”. The danger, of course, is that the trained reader will in a sense take the Bible away from the ordinary reader, and interpret their experience through his/her cultural grid (Masoga in Upkong 2002:95-109; Upkong in Getui 2001:188f; Upkong in Upkong et al. 2002:22-24). These are valid concerns and I consciously attempted to mitigate this problem by checking interpretations with church members.

As a participant observer, issues of race, culture and religious background must be faced. I am a white male Mennonite Canadian who lived in Botswana for twelve years. All of those traits could be seen as detrimental for understanding the churches involved in this study. On the other hand I also bring certain strengths to this task. Having worked with ASCs during my years in Botswana, my understanding of both Setswana language and culture is reasonably well developed. Second, even though I

come from a theologically conservative, non-Pentecostal background,²¹ I have long had interest and involvement in the charismatic movement. Finally, having spent a number of years in Botswana, I have developed relationships with many people within these churches who appear to feel comfortable sharing their beliefs and concerns with me. Although these factors do not eliminate my white North American background, I believe they do at least diminish my biases somewhat. Does this remove the problem of subjectivity or “the problem of bias” identified by Sundkler in his study of Spiritual churches (in Maluleke 1996c:32)? Unfortunately it does not. The best I can do is to declare my intentions. I have chosen to pursue this particular topic of study because of the relationships I have formed with various churches in Botswana. I want to see these churches grow and make an impact in their own context and beyond. I believe that by better understanding each other, even in areas of considerable theological or ethical disagreement, these churches will become more effective participants in the *missio Dei*.

1.4 Literature Review: Relations Of Power

1.4.1 The Importance Of Power

The preoccupation with gaining and exercising power in both ASC and especially NPC discourses has been noted by many (e.g., Anderson 1990; Marshall 1991; Kalu 2000b; Born 2007; Ellis & ter Haar 2004). Not surprisingly then, this particular theme will arise on a recurring basis throughout the course of this study. For this reason the literature review focuses on tracing the necessary lines for establishing a theoretical framework when discussing power relations within the “contested space”. When discussing the importance of power for ASCs, Inus Daneel (1984:83) noted that their healing activities demonstrate that “Christ is best understood as healer, wonder-worker and protector against evil powers”. Anderson (1990, 1991) built upon Daneel’s foundation in his studies focusing on the Spirit (“*Moya*” in Setswana or Sesotho). He has argued that the ASC emphasis on *Moya* provided their central appeal to so many Africans. “In the African Independent Churches the Holy Spirit is unanimously

²¹ I was raised, baptized and ordained in the Mennonite Brethren Church of Canada, an Anabaptist Evangelical denomination formed in Russia in 1861 but with roots back to the Radical Reformation.

associated with power – whether physical, moral, or spiritual – and the Holy Spirit is viewed as the all-embracing, pervading power of God” (1990:73). The importance of the Spirit is underlined by the ASC moniker in Botswana, *dikereke tsa semoya*, spiritual churches, discussed earlier. It is impossible to understand the popularity of ASCs apart from their belief that the Spirit of God is able to empower, protect, deliver, purify and heal anyone seeking help.

The importance of power for NPCs is reflected in the titles of scholarly works such as Ruth Marshall-Fratani’s “Power in the Name of Jesus” (1991) and Ogbu Kalu’s *Power, Poverty and Prayer* (2000b). Here too one finds the argument that Holy Spirit power encompasses all of life: “the new spiritual power possessed by the born again individual can not be disassociated from the ‘practical’ power to transform his/her social and economic world” (Marshall-Fratani 1991:36). Marshall-Fratani (1995:289-291; 1998:291) suggests that the primary effect of receiving the power of the Spirit for NPC members is that it empowers them to change identity, to choose a new story line or narrative. In this process a new vision of reality, an *imaginaire* of power, is created, one in which each believer is endowed with supernatural power, dignity and the ability to craft a future filled with hope instead of despair (also Kalu 1998:5).

Corten and Marshall-Fratani (2001:4) use the term, “*imaginaire* of power”, to describe how Pentecostalism offers a new and alternative vision of the world. “Pentecostalism constitutes not only a discourse within modernity, but also a discourse *about* modernity, insofar as it elaborates a series of reflections on the present, adopting and adapting modernity’s techniques, discourses, and practices into a new *imaginaire*”.²² Their goal is to provide a new way of organizing the world, a holistic vision that binds together temporal and spiritual realities. But more than just offer an enticing vision, they also promise the power to transform an individual’s spiritual, social

²² Drawing on Charles Taylor’s use of the term “social imaginary”, Kåre Eriksen (2007:71-76) has recently discussed this social concept at length and argued that Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity functions as more than just theology, “but as a worldview that infuses the imagination of its followers, and thus constitutes the source of implicit understandings of a moral order that characterizes the social imaginary” (:75).

and economic world. “The emphasis is placed on enabling action, and what is involved in the process of such empowerment” (Marshall 1995:246).

In one of Marshall-Fratani’s earliest articles (1991:36) she provided a lengthy quote from a work by the philosopher, Achille Mbembe:

The logic of Christianity is an imperial logic in the sense that it ties together in the same network the construction of organising concepts of the world here below and on high with an ‘imaginaire’ of power, of authority, of society, of time, of justice and of dreams; in short, of history and its ultimate truth. The distinction between ‘temporal power’ and ‘spiritual power’ is therefore in a sense, artificial...Christianity is to a large extent a way of proclaiming ‘the truth’, which is to say, a certain way of mentally and practically constructing earthly and celestial realities” (*her translation*).

In relation to this study, Mbembe’s words are important for at least four reasons. First is his recognition that “Christianity is an imperial logic”. As he goes on to explain, it encompasses all of life and provides a way of looking at the world. Second, he notes the creation of an ‘imaginaire’ of power that allows individuals to live and act in new and liberating ways. Third, he highlights the way in which Christianity both produces and proclaims “the truth” in its understanding of the universe and everything in it. The production of truth is crucial for maintaining power.

A fourth contribution from Mbembe is his observation that this alternative source of power, although often referred to as spiritual or religious, cannot be divorced from temporal or material power because it impacts one’s social and economic realities – it transforms one’s everyday life. Although Westerners have often tried to separate these two spheres, it seems clear that many Africans view power in a more holistic sense. The two spheres impinge upon one another and often overlap (Ellis & ter Haar 1998:195). Anderson’s discussion (1990:68) of the traditional concepts of power is useful as well. “In the holistic African worldview we may not adopt a Western dualistic idea that the power of the Spirit only has to do with some sort of mystical, inner power and nothing with our concrete physical, social, political and economic needs.” It is for this reason that one must consider the entire context, including the traditional Setswana cosmology that still guides most Batswana as well as the radically altered social context that has resulted from rapid development, urbanization and new technologies.

One final comment to make at this point concerns Mbembe's generalization of Christianity. What he says is true, but it fails to recognize that there are many varieties of Christianity. So the natural question to ask is this: which type or image of Christianity will emerge as dominant in the "contested space" of Botswana? Furthermore, the fact that both groups claim to rely on Holy Spirit power to overcome the difficulties of life begs the question: what is the difference between them? A careful analysis and comparison of the means of accessing spiritual power, symbols of spiritual power and the beliefs surrounding powerful spiritual beings including angels, ancestors, witches and evil spirits is necessary to understand why two groups that appear so closely related stand so far apart. Marshall-Fratani and Mbembe provide a helpful starting point in this discussion of power, but they only begin to hint at the dynamics at play in the exercise of power. It is important to understand the inner workings of power relations in order to best analyze how ASCs and NPCs seek to appropriate and exercise power in their specific cultural contexts. In order to do so, I will briefly discuss the works of Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, James Scott and John and Jean Comaroff, while noting the significant contribution of Robin Petersen.

1.4.2 The Discourse Of Power (Michel Foucault)

For purposes of this study, the ideas surrounding power propounded by the French philosopher Michel Foucault are highly significant. He argued (1980:98) that one cannot speak about power as though it were a tangible object, "a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization". For this reason, one must speak of "relations of power"²³, understanding that these "relations" create an "economy of discourse of truth". Foucault (1980:93) argued that:

[I]n any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse.

²³ "Power in the substantive sense, *'le' pouvoir*, doesn't exist. What I mean is this.... In reality power means relations, a more-or-less organized, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations" (Foucault 1980:198).

Power does not exist in a void but requires a discourse, and therefore it is better to speak of systems of power relations instead of the amorphous idea of 'power'.

Already one can discern a direct connection with the words of Mbembe regarding the construction of an "imaginaire of power", for Foucault argued that the "production of truth" is critical for establishing power in relationships. In his words: "We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth" (1980:93; also McHoul & Grace 1997:64).²⁴ Based on Foucault's ideas, the intimate relationship between power and knowledge/truth is obvious – one cannot exist without the other. When a person or institution asserts a statement, it becomes "power" when someone else (the other) takes the statement as "true". The production of truth legitimizes the use of power. Furthermore, there is a belief that those who are in positions of power have specialist knowledge; therefore they are able to "produce truth".

The idea of "relations of power" is of critical importance for this study because "there are no relations of power without resistances" (Foucault 1980:142). Power is never exercised within a vacuum. I will argue that both ASCs and NPCs have arisen in part as a resistance movement to the Western influences introduced into Botswana life. McHoul and Grace (1997:84) spell out the implications of Foucault's argument: "a strategic manoeuvre must be countered by an opposing manoeuvre; a set of tactics must be consciously invented in opposition to the setting in place of another". Thus, when analyzing power, it is highly important to study all agents involved in the discourse. In fact, Foucault (1980:99-102) recommends that one analyze power from an ascending instead of a descending point of view. Often it is the techniques and

²⁴ Foucault would not have appreciated the theological dimension of truth that is so important for both ASCs and NPCs. For him, truth was a human construct. "Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true" (1980:131).

tactics employed by those resisting hegemonic forms of power that provide the most useful information regarding the actual dynamics in the discourse of power.²⁵

In addition, Foucault postulated that the production of “truth” is achieved by means of a wide variety of *techniques* and *tactics* of power (see McHoul & Grace 1997:65). Therefore to understand the nature of power, one must analyze the techniques employed by those involved in the discourse. As mentioned above, Foucault argued that one should begin by considering the way the dominated resist the forces of outside agents. In this effort, individuals exercise real power in this “discourse” and can effect personal transformations by means of “technologies of the self” (1980:98). These he (in Martin 1988:17) defines as technologies:

which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.²⁶

As will become evident in the discussion concerning the ASC and NPC experiences of power, this is the kind of personal transformation many are seeking. In addition, we recognize that an understanding of the local context is critical, for the creation of new identities and worldviews is always established in a dialectical relationship with powerful outside forces (e.g., Western culture).

1.4.3 Strategies And Tactics (Michel de Certeau)

Another French philosopher whose ideas concerning the practice of power and tactics of resistance have had wide influence is Michel de Certeau. In his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), he examines the ways in which people re-appropriate the products of culture for their own uses. He argues that people are not passive, non-

²⁵ The assertion of Harvey Cox (2000:11) may be appropriate here: “But I am convinced that religion is the royal road to the heart of a civilization, the clearest indication of its hopes and terrors, the surest index of how it is changing”. The religious aspirations of “the powerless” often tell us more about a situation than the pronouncements (i.e., the production of truth) of “the powerful”.

²⁶ Ellis and ter Haar (2004:166) employ a slightly different translation which focuses specifically on the longing for supernatural power: “techniques that... produce in them a transformation, a modification, and [enable them] to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity and of supernatural power”.

thinking consumers but rather creative individuals who practice various “tactics of consumption” in an often subconscious struggle against powerful institutions. As an example, he (1984:xiii) cites the ways in which the indigenous peoples of the Americas subverted Spanish efforts to impose their culture.

Submissive, and even consenting to their subjection, the Indians (sic) nevertheless often made the rituals, representations, and laws imparted on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept.

The connection with Foucault’s concern to analyze relations of power from the bottom up, as opposed to the top down, is immediately apparent.

For de Certeau, power relations are primarily understood in terms of two opposing forces. Using language borrowed from the battlefield, he argues that institutions employ “strategies” to achieve their ends, whereas everyday people respond by means of “tactics”. Strategies are recognized authorities that function as the dominant order in a society. They tend to control resources, have a definite “place”, and have achieved a degree of mastery over time. In addition, they are relatively inflexible, orderly and focused on “winning” in whatever field they enter, be it business, politics, education or religion.

A tactic, on the other hand, “is an art of the weak” (1984:37). Not having any place of their own, individuals or groups may resist powerful forces by means of tactics, using whatever space or resource that becomes available. Forced to operate in the territory of the powerful, these groups must employ trickery and keep a “low profile”, operating in marginal “spaces”.²⁷ With little to hold them in place, tactics are better able than strategies to adapt to a changing context and take advantage of opportune moments. “It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in

²⁷ “Innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other’s game... characterize the subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups, which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces and representations. *People have to make do with what they have*” (emphasis mine, de Certeau 1984:18).

them". But in the end, it does not overpower dominant forces. As de Certeau says: "What it wins it cannot keep" (1984:37).

In Robin Petersen's masterful discussion of the value of de Certeau's ideas for the study of ASCs and their resistance to dominating forces, he highlights some of the tactics they employ. Focusing on their marginality, Petersen (1996:187-188) notes how many ASCs carve out "spaces" that are temporary and fragile (public parks, river banks, small shacks in townships, hillside shanties). They "make do" with what they have, in order to create a space wherein the Spirit can effect healing and transformation in their lives. In addition, he (:188-196) also emphasizes de Certeau's penetrating insights regarding the conflict between "scriptural" (literate) and "oral" systems. Recognizing that orality is largely a thing of the past in Western societies, de Certeau notes how this has led to the equation of progress with the scriptural. "It is thus not without reason that for the past three centuries learning to write has been the very definition of entering into a capitalist and conquering society" (1984:136).²⁸ But the dominated are not entirely silenced; they still have a voice, if one is careful to listen. In both ASCs and NPCs it is critical to note their use of the biblical text that speaks as the Spirit leads, healing rituals that include dance, song and symbols as well as their incorporation of extemporaneous prayer and tongue speaking (*glossalalia*).

In the first chapter of his book, de Certeau provides examples of how everyday believers have employed "the miraculous" as a tactic of resistance to the powerful. He (1984:17-18) notes that this is done not by rejecting foreign beliefs but by assuming them for their own needs and ends.

The rural "believers" thus subvert the fatality of the established order. And they do it by using a frame of reference which also proceeds from an external power (the religion imposed by Christian missions). They re-employ a system that, far from being their own, has been constructed and spread by others, and they mark

²⁸ Paul Landau (1995:19) describes this same dynamic taking place among the Batswana when literacy, along with the Bible (*Lefoko la Modimo*), was introduced by Christian missionaries in the 19th century. "It was critical that '*Lefoko la Modimo*' entered Ngwato usage when only a tiny minority of BaNgwato, the royal cult of "the Word" were literate. To the non-literate, Christianity-and-literacy - in other words, *thuto* – was confined in its full possession to devotees of this cult. They were then 'of the Word' and might derive benefits in health, status, and power from it."

this re-employment by “superstitions,” excrescences of this belief in miracles which civil and religious authorities have always correctly suspected of putting in question the “reason” behind power and knowledge hierarchies.

This same kind of dynamic is clearly at work in both ASCs and NPCs. Dealing with powerful forces from both inside and outside their cultural frameworks, they are employing a variety of tactics, often using the resources brought to them by Western agents, in an effort to establish their space in the world.

1.4.4 Hidden Transcripts (James Scott)

Borrowing from Foucault and de Certeau, James Scott (1990) argued in his book, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, that people and cultures experiencing significant marginalization often resist by means of “hidden transcripts”. Unable to resist domination by any other means, the oppressed often resort to signs, symbols and language that seems either harmless or confusing to the oppressors. “This is a politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors. Rumour, gossip, folktales, jokes, songs, rituals, codes and euphemisms – a good part of the folk culture of subordinate groups – fit this description” (Scott 1990:19). Due to control by those in power, this “coded resistance” is often unaccounted for in the public record or transcript employed by the traditional tools of social analysis.

Scott argues that while this “hidden transcript” functions as coded resistance, it should be recognized as a conscious attempt to undermine the deliberate attempts of those in authority to maintain their control. Both the dominators and the oppressed are engaged in a type of performance. His analysis is brilliant on a number of levels but as Petersen (1996:214-215) has demonstrated, he has somewhat overstated his case by negating the possibility of unconscious opposition and resistance. In relation to both types of churches in this study, Scott’s arguments are highly pertinent as it appears that ASCs and NPCs make use of subtle critique of the cultures around them as well as each other. Both groups have experienced various forms of oppression and social ostracism, and have learned to function in a somewhat hostile context. Therefore it is

critically important to examine carefully what these groups are doing when they employ their symbols and rituals.

1.4.5 The Long Conversation (John and Jean Comaroff)

One of the weaknesses identified in the previous arguments is the tendency to create somewhat of a chasm between the weak and strong, and a failure to take into account both overt and non-overt forms of domination and resistance. This is probably most obvious in the work of de Certeau and Scott who speak of tactics and hidden transcripts as “weapons of the weak”. But often the situation is much more complex than simple binary oppositions, with various groups vying for their particular view of reality. It is not so much a case of hegemonic control, as it is a contest of ideologies.²⁹ Clearly some groups will have access to greater resources than others, but this does not mean that the dominated are without means. John and Jean Comaroff sensed this weakness and moved to correct it in their study of the Tshidi people of South Africa.

In their book, *Of Revelation and Revolution* (1991), they include an important explanation of the relations between culture, ideology, hegemony, power and consciousness (1991:19-31). Their discussion is especially pertinent in that they have outlined the way in which power is experienced within culture in terms of a series of continua. Robin Petersen is again helpful as he has diagrammed their ideas as follows:

Power: *Non-agentive* < ----- > *Agentive*
Consciousness: *Unconscious* < ----- > *Conscious*
Power & Culture: *Hegemony* < ----- > *Ideology*

Figure 1: Continua of Power (Petersen 1996:220)

The poles of the continua should not be understood as diametrical opposites, for social life or culture is in constant flux, always subject to change. With regard to power, the Comaroffs argue that there are two primary ways that it is experienced: the agentive

²⁹ With regard to the encounter of African and Western cultures, Tinyiko Maluleke has lamented the way many scholars have tended to pit the “giant” of Western culture over against the “midget” of African cultures (1996a:20-21).

and the non-agentive modes. They define the agentive mode as “the (relative) capacity of human beings to shape the actions and perceptions of others by exercising control over the production, circulation, and consumption of signs and objects, over the making of both subjectivities and realities” (1991:22). This is the active, and most often visible, ability to influence others directly. In the non-agentive mode, power is often hidden, or at least difficult to see. Here power can be ascribed to transcendental or supernatural forces such as gods or ancestors as well as to nature or physics. Although these forms of power are beyond human control they are often internalized at a subliminal level in everyday activities, values and habits.

As the continua suggest, the conscious employment of power is closely aligned to the promotion of an ideology. The Comaroffs were concerned to demonstrate how dominated groups use their ideologies (counter-worldviews, counter-symbolic and ideational structures and visions) to resist the mastery of those more powerful (see R. Petersen 1996:222). Following Raymond Williams, they define ideology as “an articulated system of meanings, values and beliefs of a kind that can be abstracted as the ‘worldview’ of any social grouping” (1991:24). Ideologies are most often formulated in relation to hegemony or other ideologies.³⁰ The Comaroffs’ discussion of power is important on a number of levels but especially with regard to the dynamics that occur when cultures come into contact with one another. Their primary concern is the manner in which dominated cultures both succumb to and resist dominating cultures – power is experienced as a “discourse” (Foucault) or as they prefer to describe it, as a “conversation”. In another of their works they discuss the remarkable ways in which local cultures re-invest foreign symbols and rites with new meaning and thus take them over as their own. The result is a new image or identity that can potentially empower those living in a rapidly changing world. They argue that “their activities are in fact a means of *producing* historical consciousness: they seek to shape the inchoateness, the murky ambiguity of colonial encounters into techniques of empowerment and signs of

³⁰ The Comaroffs (1991:23) define hegemony as: “that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies – drawn from a historically situated cultural field – that come to be taken-for-granted as the natural and received shape of the world and everything that inhabits it”.

collective representation” (1993:xxii). This is a conscious effort to draw on any and all available cultural resources in an effort to navigate a highly fluid social context.

This use of agentic power is highly significant for this study because it deals with groups that are struggling with the forces of Western imperialism, modernity, urbanization and globalization. Following de Certeau, the Comaroffs suggest that local cultures often take over foreign signs, symbols and ideas and then reinterpret them (often subconsciously) for their own purposes – these are their tactics. The production, interpretation and control of these forms are critical for re-establishing control over one’s life. By means of these “tactics,” people create a distinct identity and ideology, a new world, in relationship to other significant groups within their sphere.

When considering the language and tactics of power employed by both ASCs and NPCs, it is useful to note that the focus is primarily on agentic power, the conscious use of power to influence one’s circumstances or other people. Both groups claim they have access to spiritual power that enables them to manage or perhaps overcome other forces with which they come into contact. It is also important to note that agentic power comes in various forms – as signs, symbols, ideas and representations. The production and control of these forms is foundational to understanding the world around them as well as for maintaining life-giving power.

But non-agentic power, the unconscious or unintentional use of power, is also significant. Following the Comaroffs, Robin Petersen has made explicit some of their more implicit ideas concerning ASC resistance to domination. In addition to his diagram of the Comaroffs’ continua (Figure 1), he includes the following chart:

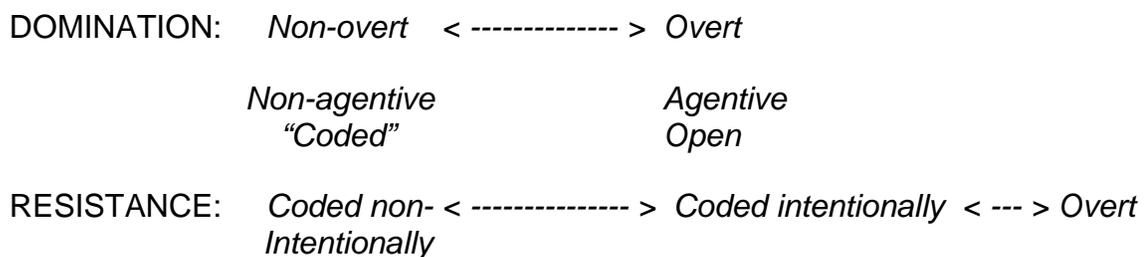


Figure 2: Continua of Domination/Resistance (Petersen 1996:228)

Petersen (1996:228) rightly notes the importance of recognizing the existence of “coded resistance which is a response to non-overt, non-agentive, elusive but viscerally experienced forms of domination associated with the formal structures of domination such as abstract time, the commodity form, language, built form, etc.” This is the kind of resistance often found within ASCs and NPCs, sometimes exercised consciously while at other times operating on the subconscious level.

Paul Gifford (1998:334-39) has been highly critical of the foreign, especially American, influence on NPCs. But a more careful analysis calls for greater awareness of the way Africans selectively choose and adapt what they receive from foreign sources in order to fit the local context. Recognizing that imported signs and symbols are often reinterpreted for local purposes is essential. In this way, signs and symbols become both indigenous and a powerful tool for connecting to the outside world. Once again the Comaroffs (1993:xxii) are helpful at this point:

A colonial coin, a Christian gesture, a bureaucratic rite, or an imported commodity may serve to situate people in wider regional, national, and international landscapes: once woven into local performances, practices, or costumes, they have the power to impart a sense of presence through which distant horizons become tangible realities.

Viewed from this perspective, the power of signs and symbols to define identity within the local as well as global context is obvious.

When looking at southern Africa over the last century, one discovers that even though Western culture has had huge impact, African cultures have still been able to create and maintain their identity.³¹ One can argue that both Western culture and African cultures have become the major ideologies in this context, with clear distinctions between them. I contend that both types of churches in this study are attempting, consciously and unconsciously, to come to terms with these multiple cultures, or ideologies, in their attempt to create “worlds of the Spirit” which will help their followers gain control over their lives.

³¹ The Comaroffs (1992:159-162; 1993:309-314) have done a masterful job of illustrating that one of the unintended results of the encounter between European and Batswana was the reification of Setswana culture as a system of belief or worldview.

1.4.6 Linking The Spiritual And Temporal

One critical lack in this discussion of power is the realization that all of the above theorists are rather reductionist in their tendency to view power exclusively as a human construct. Mbembe's quote in the introduction to this section noted the connection between spiritual and temporal realities in the "imperial logic" of Christianity. The danger of using Western theories of power to analyze the relationship between ASCs and NPCs in Botswana is that this study will also become reductionist. Missiologist Paul Hiebert (1982) long ago recognized the seeming inability of many Western missionaries to come to terms with what he referred to as "the excluded middle". Having inherited a two-tiered view of the world, spiritual and material/temporal, these missionaries were unable to address the critical questions raised in many non-Western contexts. Hiebert (1982:44) asks: "What is a Christian theology of ancestors; of animals and plants; of local spirits and spirit possession; and of principalities, powers and rulers of the darkness of this world (Eph. 6:12)?" The spiritual dimension of power relations must also be taken very seriously in this analysis because it is crucially important for both ASCs and NPCs.

The preceding discussion has yielded the following conclusions. First, power is not just an intangible force experienced in a vacuum; it manifests itself in relations of power. Second, in those relations, the exercise of power will always be met with some form of resistance. The promotion of a certain ideology will always give rise to a counter ideology, with its own language, symbols and rituals. Third, these symbols and rituals, referred to as "techniques of the self" (Foucault), or "tactics" (de Certeau), are employed to establish a counter identity and worldview. Fourth, since domination can be both non-overt and overt, so too can resistance function on both a conscious and an unconscious level. These techniques or tactics often manifest themselves as coded resistance, practiced silently or out of the view of outsiders, and thus producing a "hidden transcript". In light of these findings, this study will attempt to analyze the language and symbols of power found in both ASCs and NPCs in relationship to the competing ideologies surrounding these churches. For not only are they challenging

each other in the “contested space” of Holy Spirit-type movements, they are also involved in a significant discourse with Western and Setswana cultures and ideologies.

1.5 Conclusion

Even though ASCs and NPCs share a common orientation towards the Spirit, the primary contention of this study is that they should be recognized as distinct bodies due to their unique approaches to, and appropriation of, the power of the Spirit. Artificial attempts to impose unity by placing both groups into the same category, “Pentecostal”, is not fair to either group, and does not respect their unique contributions to the larger body of Christ, the church. Dependent upon the Spirit for power and guidance, they have drawn upon the resources available to them to create distinct identities and worldviews in relation to socio-cultural forces at work in the Botswana context. The purpose of this dissertation is not to judge the various theological viewpoints and practices of these two movements but to recognize them as distinct and important contributions to the growth of Christianity in Africa, and examine how they employ the power of the Spirit in daily life.

My exploration of the relationship between these movements begins in Chapter Two with an examination of the origins of churches under study. It considers the perspectives of the founders as well as the socio-political, historical and religious context of Botswana at the time of their emergence. In this initial look at these churches, questions of contextualization are immediately evident. What changed in the historical, sociological and religious circumstances that created the conditions for the rise of these churches, and why did they turn to the power of the Spirit to make sense of their world? Chapter Three is concerned with the critical issue of identity formation, and the creation of ideological “worlds of the Spirit” as a way to exercise power in a rapidly changing context. In Chapter Four, biblical hermeneutics is the primary focus. The manner in which these churches creatively approach the Bible and use it to construct new identities along with alternative ways of viewing the world around them will be examined in light of their propensity to rely on the Spirit for new revelation. In Chapter

Five, I shift attention to beliefs and practices concerning healing and deliverance from evil forces. Both types of churches are well-known for their colorful and dramatic efforts to enable their followers to experience life as God intended. The usage of symbols and ritual as ideological tactics in both ASCs and NPCs is examined carefully in an effort to demonstrate their unique employment of spiritual power.

Finally, in Chapter Six the contested battleground of culture and covenant is fully engaged. The attempt of each group to empower their followers through the production of truth is highly evident in their approaches to both Setswana culture and Western forces. What emerges from their efforts is the creation of two distinct “worlds of the Spirit” where power is mediated through their unique interpretations of Scripture, cultures, the spiritual world and the various symbols and technologies present in their contexts. This final discussion leads into the concluding chapter where I will recap the arguments presented throughout the study and outline the various similarities and differences that have been uncovered in the research. In my final comments I intend to provide some reflection on a number of critical questions concerning the contextualization of the gospel, along with some suggestions as to why and how these churches should increase dialogue and cooperation with one another in mission.

CHAPTER TWO

ORIGINS AND THE SPIRIT

2.1 Introduction

In order to gain a full picture of the churches in this study, it is necessary to begin with the question of origins and causative factors that gave rise to both of these movements. When comparing the stories of the founding leaders of the churches under discussion, one is struck by amazing similarities as well as significant differences. Both Archbishop J.M. Madimabe of the Hermon Church (HC) and the Apostle D.D. Monnakgosi of Goodnews Ministries (GM) tell of significant conflict in the formation of their churches, miraculous healings, dreams and connections to older mission churches. On the other hand, their life trajectories have taken very different paths. Minimally educated, Madimabe has remained in the small, rural village of Sefophe for nearly 40 years, supporting his family primarily through subsistence agriculture, with most of his congregation consisting of people on the lower rungs of the economic ladder. By contrast, Monnakgosi is a highly trained engineer who worked for various government agencies and served as an instructor in the technical department of the University of Botswana. He has lived in the capital city of Gaborone with a ministry geared towards serving a young, urban congregation.

Some have suggested that the reasons for the differences between these men and their churches have arisen primarily on account of the cultural transformations occurring at the time these churches were formed. Anderson (2002:167) provides a good example: "I would argue that this newer Pentecostal and Charismatic movement is not fundamentally different from the Holy Spirit movements and the so-called 'prophet-healing' and 'spiritual churches' that preceded it in the African Initiated Churches (AICs), but it is a continuation of them in a very different context" (also Ellis & ter Haar 1998:200). Stuart Bate (2001:361) makes a similar argument by referring to both groups as "coping-healing" churches that meet common human needs through "different

cultural approaches". From this point of view, the differences between the churches can be accounted for by the changing context in which they were formed.

The danger in this approach is that it views these churches simply as products of cultural change. The question of whether these churches are merely helping people survive in a hostile context, or creatively empowering them to succeed, is significant. This is where the theoretical discussion of power found in the introductory chapter becomes highly pertinent. Are these groups simply survival mechanisms reacting to powerful global and local forces, or is there an original, creative spark inspiring them to imagine a whole new world of the Spirit? Thrust into an ideological conflict between a reified Setswana worldview and Western forces, these leaders discovered that the power of the Spirit enabled them to produce a new way of traversing a confusing context. The production of an innovative narrative, a new "truth" so to speak, empowered them to deal with past, present and future challenges and opportunities.

Numerous scholars have attempted to answer the question raised above regarding the origins of both ASCs and NPCs from a variety of perspectives. The first section of this chapter will discuss their approaches, and argue that one simple answer to the question does not do justice to the complexity of the issue. Instead, a more synthetic perspective which encompasses both external and internal factors is more likely to produce an accurate portrayal of all the dynamics at work. In this effort, consideration of the Botswana cultural milieu is a necessity, for it will be demonstrated that these churches emerged within a context of competing ideologies. Therefore the second section of the chapter will outline the key issues within the Botswana context that contributed to the formation and theology of these churches. The third section tells the stories of the leaders and their churches, while the final section provides a comparative analysis, focusing on the profound spiritual experiences of the church founders along with their ability to adjust to the changing realities of their cultural context.

2.2 Theories Of Causation

2.2.1 ASC Origins And “Cultures Of Hybridity”

Over the past 60 years, numerous causes have been suggested for the emergence of the ASC movement including socio-political factors such as the introduction of a capitalist economy, secularization, foreign political structures and prolonged contact between an alien religion and the African religious belief system (Venter 1998:416-421; 2004:31-39). Some pointed to the failure of missionaries to demonstrate Christian love, and their refusal to empower African Christians to lead their own churches. Still others have chosen to focus on the ability of ASCs to fulfill African religious aspirations such as the desire for spiritual power to overcome all manner of evil, and thus provide needed physical, spiritual, emotional or mental healing (Anderson 2000a:380-381; Pomerville 1985:76-78).

At present, it seems that there is a growing consensus that one theory of causation cannot explain all of the data. Recent studies by Dawid Venter (2004) and others engage the question of ASC causation in relation to modernity in a most comprehensive manner. In his introductory chapter, Venter returns to Bengt Sundkler's controversial claim (1961:297) that ASCs represent a bridge leading back from orthodox Christianity to traditional African beliefs. Venter suggests that “the bridge” analogy may actually be quite accurate if understood as a means of allowing traffic in both directions. Drawing on the work of Stuart Hall, Venter argues that ASCs produce “cultures of hybridity” (2004:8), a space for church members to remain connected to their traditional values while also incorporating novel ideas from a variety of sources. “Instead of being a bridge back to tradition, which implies a flight from modernity, AICs provide a way of linking backwards and forwards at the same time. AICs are bridges that allow modernity to be represented in older cultural forms, while cloaking older forms of tradition in newer guises” (2004:9).

Venter's suggestion regarding “the hybridity” of the ASC movement is also relevant when discussing NPCs, as other scholars have noted the NPC desire to remain

rooted in the local context while drawing on global symbols of power (e.g., Marshall-Fratani 1998). Venter (2004:31-32) has helpfully outlined the three perspectives social scientists have adduced for the emergence of new religious movements: materialist (social change driven by class conflict), functionalist (adaptation to changing social and economic realities), and idealist (religious or spiritual awakening). Recognizing and accounting for the variety of possible causative factors related to both the ASC and NPC movements is critical in my theoretical approach; therefore I will outline each perspective briefly.

2.2.1.1 Materialist Perspective

The first two of these perspectives (materialist and functionalist) are often closely linked as they both tend to view new movements as a response to the socio-cultural realities taking place around them – either through active resistance or adaptation (Garner 2004b:198-202). From the materialist perspective, new religious movements should be analyzed through the lens of economic realities as connected to powerful global systems. Glenda Kruss (1985), employing a Marxist approach, provides one of the most consistent efforts to analyze ASCs along these lines. She argues that functionalist arguments focus too strongly on the local context without giving sufficient credence to global factors such as industrialization, rising secularism and rapid social change. With regard to ASCs, she posits three waves of growth: first, Ethiopianism with its focus on political empowerment for the masses; second, the Zionist impulse to regain land taken by Europeans; and third, the emergence of Zionist-Apostolic churches, with their healing ministry, as a protest movement against the harsh realities of capitalism. Garner (2004b:199) provides a helpful summary of Kruss' position: "their faith is a religious-cultural innovation of the dominated, which succeeds in subverting the hegemony of Western Christianity, in reappropriating the means of salvation, in the form of their healing ministry".

2.2.1.2 Functionalist Perspective

With her determination to give global economic realities adequate attention, Kruss provides a valuable contribution, but she also falls into the opposite trap of failing to take the local context seriously enough. Quite closely related to the materialist approach is the functionalist, which focuses on the way ASCs have adapted to radically changing social realities. Garner (2004b:200) suggests that the Comaroffs and Petersen represent a synthesis of the functionalist-materialist perspectives with their emphasis on coded resistance to Western economic and religious domination offered by ASCs through their healing rituals. Along similar lines, Jules-Rosette (1989:156-157) and Venter (1998:432-436) argued that ASCs are “cultural responses to secularization,” African adaptations of Western forms of religious identity. ASCs “represent the emergence of a new African identity, which spans traditional and modern cultural practices” (Venter 2004:34). The focus is on the creation of “cultures of hybridity” that span the local/global, rural/urban, African/Western dichotomies that emerged in the 20th century.

Other arguments for ASC causation follow a more traditional understanding of functionalism. In David Barrett’s analysis of ASCs he focused more on the ecclesiastical dimensions and concluded that the root cause of the ASC movement was a missionary failure to demonstrate the “biblical concept of love” (1968:156). While this suggestion certainly has merit, more popular has been the suggestion that ASCs provided impoverished Africans with “havens of belonging” (Daneel 1987:101; also Oosthuizen 1997:8-12). Throughout the 20th century, many Africans found themselves adrift in uncharted cultural territory; they needed a familiar community, a place that would empower them to face the challenges of the new world in which they lived and worked.

Both the materialist and functionalist perspectives outlined above have tended to view ASCs as reactionary movements. Some scholars feel that this portrayal too simply paints the ASC movement as a “negative reaction against a variety of situations” (Pauw

1995:14). They argue that greater credit should be given to the creative impulses arising from within these communities. In this regard, they are moving towards an idealist perspective. Daneel (2004:194-199) suggests ASCs should be referred to as religio-cultural, socioeconomic, political liberation movements, while Pauw (1995:15) defines them “a people’s response to the Christian message as understood, interpreted and applied by people in their own particular context of change”. These formulations begin to attribute a religious or spiritual dimension to the ASC movement but with their focus on “liberation” and “response”, they still seem preoccupied with external factors.

2.2.1.3 Idealist Perspective

This final perspective, the idealist, in its purest form introduces the possibility of a spiritual element in the generation and continued vitality of the ASC movement. Socio-economic forces take a backseat, although ASCs may both affect and be affected by these realities. Whether the focus is on the inspiration of God’s Word (Daneel 1987:100), or simply the presence of the Spirit (Cox 1995:81), this perspective calls attention to the work of God in these churches. “The role of divine healing and exorcism especially, and the receiving of the power of the Holy Spirit, presents a new and vigorous Christianity which offers help to all of life’s problems” (Anderson 1995:291). While focusing on the spiritual dimension, these commentators also strongly promote a careful analysis of the sociological factors that have contributed to their emergence (see Cox 2000:11; Anderson 2004a:241-242).

To attempt a grand theory of causation for the ASC movement seems rather presumptuous. Rather, I would posit that it is best to recognize the wide range of factors that all contributed to the original generation of this movement as well as its continued vitality. The danger of choosing any one perspective – materialist, functionalist or idealist – is that of reductionism. Clearly global realities impinged on the southern African context, creating huge social-economic and political disruptions at the local level. At the same time, I would argue that the bracketing of spiritual and religious

aspirations practiced by many social scientists leads to less than satisfactory conclusions.

2.2.2 NPC Origins And A “New Vision”

As one would expect from a younger phenomenon, there is considerably less literature discussing the issues pertaining to NPCs as compared to that of the older ASCs. Interestingly though, one soon finds much of the same ground being covered. Numerous scholars prefer to focus on the socio-political realities of Africa as the cause for these new churches with their emphasis on power and prosperity (Gifford 1993:199). According to Marshall-Fratani (1995:246-248) the need for a new and empowering vision of the world has arisen on account of the dismal failure of African nation-states to deliver both democracy and development. Under a wave of Afro-pessimism, some have alleged that African “leaders have poured ashes on our faces” (Kalu 1998:5). Linked to this political dissatisfaction has been the inability of both mission churches and ASCs to construct an empowering vision for the future – they are seen as powerless to impact daily life. Thus it has been asserted that the NPCs stepped into the gap created by the failure of both nation-states and older churches, and provided an alternative *imaginaire* of the world, and promised the power to deliver on that vision.

Although this power is most definitely viewed in spiritual terms, it cannot be divorced from temporal concerns precisely because of its claim to change social and economic realities – it transforms everyday life. No longer bound by a “spirit of poverty”, NPC members have been “born again” and are now able to experience success in relationships, accumulate wealth and overcome any hardship (Maxwell 1998:352-361). With their confident outlook on life, they feel that they can challenge both personal and social problems. As one Bishop has said, “We have been anointed as change agents for Africa. This anointing is not given to you just so you can feed your family – it is to make you a blessing to the

world” (in Jenkins 2006:95-96). Clearly socio-economic realities are major factors in the origination of this movement.

One other important issue in this discussion has been the issue of foreign influence. Paul Gifford was one of the first scholars to seriously analyze the emergence of NPCs in Africa. Beginning with his study in southern Africa (1988), and consistently into the present (2001:62-65), he has argued that African NPCs have basically appropriated the theology of the Faith Movement¹ from the United States with little or no modification. In concert with other commentators, Gifford highlights the economic collapse that many African nations have suffered in past decades. He argues that pastors have found the prosperity gospel useful for their own economic benefit (1998:335), while dire economic realities have also encouraged churches to look overseas for help (1990:383). Commenting on this perspective, Kalu (2003b:85) somewhat cynically notes how “interest has focused on how global cultural forces (the extraneous) have overwhelmed local identities and the Pentecostal impulse in Africa is imaged as an extension of the American electronic church”.

That new Pentecostalism in Africa has foreign origins can hardly be disputed. The worldwide spread of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements from the West generated a movement that only gained momentum once it reached Africa (Ojo 1988:175-176). Therefore the central issue is not its foreign genesis but whether or not it has adapted itself to the African continent. Contrary to Gifford, some scholars (Kalu 1998:7-8; Maxwell 1995:335) now argue that although many African leaders and churches may retain an American façade they are actually rapidly indigenizing the

¹ The “Faith movement” is characterized by a radical emphasis on a positive confession of faith in order to receive all the blessings of Christ. Gifford (1998:39) describes it well: “According to the Faith Gospel, God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ, and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness and poverty.” For a full and rather critical discussion of the Faith movement, see Horn (1989) and Gifford (1993:146-189).

message they are receiving. Just because something looks or sounds American does not necessarily mean that it has not been contextualized.²

Kalu (2003b) has continued to explore the question of NPC origins but seems to have grown tired of the entire modernity/globalization discourse altogether and now advocates an idealist position where Pentecostalism in Africa is seen as a purposeful “force engaged in the religionization of cultures” (:89). He boldly asserts: “The ordinary Pentecostal in Africa is less concerned with modernity and globalization and more about a renewed relationship with God, intimacy with the transcendent, empowerment by the Holy Spirit and protection by the power of the blood of Jesus as the person struggles to eke out a viable life in a hostile environment” (:88). At the same time, he continues to maintain a strong concern to demonstrate how the NPC vision impacts not just a person’s spirituality but all areas of both personal and communal life.

2.2.3 Summary – A Synthesis Of Perspectives

Similar to the discussion regarding ASC origins, I would argue that one cannot simply focus on internal or external factors when analyzing the causes for the NPC movement. Clearly all the founders of the churches in this study were impacted by numerous global and local socio-cultural realities. In many ways, their churches can be regarded as reactions to the powerful forces at work during the 20th century. They were caught up in a clash of ideologies. At the same time, these leaders all point to an overwhelming sense of God working powerfully in their lives. Harvey Cox (1995:177) speaks to this point: “Ever since the very beginning the Pentecostal phenomenon has been the subject of conflicting interpretations. To view it, with Saint Peter, as evidence of the activity of the Spirit, is something few scholars are willing to do”. In my analysis of these movements I attempt to give each perspective the attention it deserves. I begin

² Gifford has modified his position somewhat, suggesting that the twin emphases of prosperity and deliverance from evil spirits found in most NPCs “might be viewed more as a local conceptualization expressed in a standardised foreign form” (2001:77).

with a brief overview of critical socio-economic and religious issues arising from within the Botswana context.

2.3 Origins Of The Churches In Context

2.3.1 A Meeting Of Two Worlds

In 1960, Isaac Schapera, an anthropologist with 30 years of experience in the Bechuanaland Protectorate³, wrote a fascinating article discussing the impact of Christianity on the Batswana people. He noted that some missionary apologists had made dramatic claims, suggesting that Christianity had transformed the lives of many. He quoted E.H. Brookes as follows: “Christian missions have represented the greatest conscious force for change upon Bantu life, [and] have deeply affected Bantu thought and culture” (1960:490). Schapera was well aware of the wide-ranging changes introduced by the missionaries but suggested that they had not been as creative, nor had their doctrines penetrated nearly as deeply into the hearts of the people, as they had hoped. He concluded his article with these words: “[H]owever much of a blessing it may have been to some individuals, [Christianity] has left the great majority of the people either indifferent to religion of any kind or insincere about the one they profess” (:502). His derogatory assessment of missionary efforts is important to note.

At the same time the Batswana have clearly been profoundly influenced by their contact with Christianity and Western culture. As mentioned earlier, Jean and John Comaroff (1991) have traced the intricacies in the relationship between colonial officials, missionaries and Batswana and described it as a “long conversation”. Moreover they argue that this was a true dialogue between cultures, each with their own notions of power and each impacting the other in the encounter (also Ellis & ter Haar 2004:180-181). Nevertheless the Comaroffs (1991:4) are well aware that embedded within this meeting of two cultures, or worlds, was a serious imbalance of power.

This culture - the culture of European capitalism, of Western modernity – had, and continues to have, enormous historical force – a force at once ideological and economic, semantic and social. On the face of it, some

³ This was the name given to the Republic of Botswana prior to independence from the United Kingdom.

black Africans have succumbed, some have resisted, some have tried to recast its intrusive forms in their own image. Most have done all these things, at one time or another time, in the effort to formulate an awareness of, and to gain a measure of mastery over, their changing world.

The impact of European contact with the Batswana peoples could not help but challenge traditional norms and practices. At the same time, the introduction of a foreign ideology naturally led to resistance in the formation of counter tactics and a counter ideology. The Comaroffs (1991:243-248) have done a masterful job of arguing that one of the unintended results of the encounter was a reification of Setswana culture as a system of belief or worldview. European culture, technologies and missionary doctrine became identified with *Sekgoa* while traditional custom and beliefs were objectified as *Setswana* (J Comaroff 1985:192). Here is where questions of power became so critical for the Batswana people as they were forced to navigate the difficult terrain of competing ideologies.⁴

The purpose of the discussion which follows is to highlight some of key areas of Setswana life that were impacted by the intrusion of Christianity and Western culture. Instead of tracing all aspects of this “long conversation,” I intend to focus on those areas of the changed context that clearly connect with the life stories and origins of the churches under study. The subtle changes and adaptations that took place in tribal leadership, family dynamics, beliefs surrounding deceased members of the tribe and sorcery on account of contact with Western forces will be examined. In addition the momentous changes initiated at the time of Independence will also be explored in an effort to demonstrate how the life experiences of these church founders prepared them to accept and then actively promote a new type of Christianity.

⁴ The reification of *Setswana* as an ideology is illustrated well in the secondary school textbook, *Ngwao ya Setswana* (Setswana Culture), written by Kgomotso Mogapi. He writes (1985:91): “In Setswana, the spirit of a person was bound up in the belief that his/her life was governed by the ancestors.... This belief directed a person to treat others well, because if he/she did something evil, the ancestors would punish him/her” (*Mo Setswaneng mowa wa motho o ne o bofeletswe mo tumelong ya gore botshelo jwa gagwe bo laolwa ke badimo.... Tumelo e e ne e kaela motho gore a dire dilo tse di siametseng ba bangwe, gone fa a dira tse di bosula, badimo ba tla mo otlhaya*).

2.3.2 Missionary Influence

Over time, the form of Christianity introduced to the Batswana by the missionaries would create numerous transformations in community structures and daily life. Chief among these changes was the introduction of a new group within village life, the church congregation. This group met weekly, separately from the rest of the tribe, creating the potential for disunity. Second, many traditional customs were changed or done away with completely including initiation rites (*bogwera* for boys and *bojale* for girls), polygamous marriage, bride wealth/price (*bogadi*), rainmaking rites, dancing by adults and the drinking of any type of alcohol, including traditional beer (Schapera 1960:491-493). For the vast majority of early missionaries, salvation required African believers to renounce their culture and their past, and accept the new dictates of the church (Amanze 1998:52; J & J Comaroff 1991:230-251).

In particular, the missionaries were concerned about rites and beliefs surrounding the *badimo* (ancestors), the deceased as well as aged members of the tribe who had attained a special position in relation to God (*Modimo*). Many of the traditional customs were outlawed precisely on account of their association with *badimo*. According to Amanze (1998:57), the missionaries were highly critical “of ancestor veneration which they understood as ancestor worship. Offerings and sacrifices to the ancestors were forbidden as evil”. Traditional medicine, witchcraft and ancestral power were linked together, thus leading to a vilification of anything remotely connected to the *badimo*. The missionary effort to equate the *badimo* with evil was completed with the use of the term to translate all occurrences of “evil spirit/demon” found in the Setswana Bible (J & J Comaroff 1991:218; Dube 1999b:39-42).⁵

The social implications inaugurated by banning the ancestors from daily life were more significant than most realized at the time, for the ancestors were guardians of the social order, blessing good behaviour as well as punishing transgressions of

⁵ The use of *badimo* in the translation of “evil/unclean spirit” in the Setswana Bible has engendered a considerable amount of debate. See Dube 1999b, 2001; Hermanson 1999; and Maluleke 2005b.

tribal custom (Schapera 1955:41). As intermediaries with *Modimo* (God) for both tribal leaders and family heads, they wielded great authority over the lives of all Batswana. To be removed from their power and protection was believed to lead to dire consequences (J & J Comaroff 1991:154). Thus it is not surprising to find that their presence was not obliterated from Setswana life nearly as completely as some outsiders imagined.⁶ Here one can immediately find an example of Scott's idea of a "hidden transcript" or "coded resistance" to the imposition of a foreign system of power.

When the missionaries arrived, they came with a dualistic notion of spiritual and temporal power, and suggested they only wanted to claim the spiritual power of the chiefs. By displacing the ancestors, they thought they were merely dealing with "spiritual" issues while the chiefs fully recognized that they were actually undermining their authority (J. & J. Comaroff 1991:255-257), as well as striking at the heart of Setswana culture (Dube 1999b:41-42). The elimination of rain-making rites and other events linked to the agricultural cycle clearly diminished the chief in the eyes of his people. Nevertheless the chiefs felt compelled to keep the missionaries in close proximity because of their perceived power. Early on they realized the missionaries' value as bearers of new technologies (e.g., ploughs, guns, literacy), mediators with colonial authorities and as a shield against more militant whites. It appears that the chiefs were trying to seize the powers of the missionaries while also retaining their own culturally defined authority (J & J Comaroff 1991:246; Schapera 1960:496). While this effort was understandable, it was also doomed to failure.

Eventually many of the chiefs were drawn into the church and joined forces with the missionaries in their evangelistic zeal to defeat Satan and wipe out the so-called "network of false African religious values, traditions and practices" (Amanze 1998:52-53). That said, it is not as though the chiefs completely surrendered their authority in this exchange. Even though the chiefs were virtually replaced as "tribal priests" by the

⁶ It is surprising how someone as astute as Schapera (1960:494) could claim that ancestor veneration had virtually disappeared among the Batswana. Alverson (1978:70) made a similar claim; whereas Setiloane (1976:175-200) provides numerous illustrations of the way the ancestors (*badimo*) continued to function in Setswana life.

missionaries (Schapera 1960:493), they were loathe to relinquish control easily and so they effectively established “state churches” in order to retain authority as well as limit tribal divisions.⁷ Thus, one of the defining features of Christian mission efforts prior to independence among the Batswana people was that it was introduced along tribal lines. The London Missionary Society, Lutheran Church, Dutch Reformed Church, Methodist Church, Anglican Church, Roman Catholic and Seventh Day Adventists all had their prescribed areas of ministry as determined by the chiefs (Amanze 1998:35-43).

The missionaries also promoted literacy through the introduction of schools for children and the translation of the Bible into Setswana. They believed the Bible contained objective truth, and that its truth had the power to transform a person’s life. The Batswana, too, believed that a word (*lefoko*) had power to impact life, but simply by its very utterance (Dibeela 2001:391). Spoken words are bound to have effect, but under the missionaries *lefoko* came to be associated with literacy and the written word. As certain Batswana, often those within the chiefly circle, began to associate the power of the Europeans with their reading ability, they too desired to master this skill. Eventually many of these elite joined the church and became the cult or people of the Word (Landau 1995:19). In some churches, literacy actually became a requirement for church membership (Setiloane 1976:144-146). With this emphasis on the written word and literacy, it is not surprising that the mission churches eventually came to be known as *dikereke tsa molao* (churches of the law/order). The Bible was the key resource in the missionary effort to produce “truth”, and exert their power and authority.

The missionaries, of course, also introduced other elements of Western culture, both social and technological, including notions of individualism and democracy, guns, money, new forms of dress, and the clock. The significance of these new ideas and technologies cannot be over-estimated as they laid the foundation for incorporation into life under colonial rule, which the missionaries welcomed (Isichei 1995:120-121). The

⁷ Khama III of the Bamangwato was the most forceful proponent of this strategy. His efforts to control the London Missionary Society church in his territory led to numerous conflicts with the missionaries, with the chief emerging victorious on most occasions. See Landau (1995:30-52) and Isichei (1995:118).

Comaroffs (1986:16) have summarized the effect of this new ideology on the Batswana people: “In this world, they were told, they could fashion their own lives by exercising free choice; personal achievement would be rewarded by the accumulation of goods and moral worth. Practically speaking, this meant cultivating for the market or selling their labor”. Unfortunately, while the missionaries held out the promise of a better life, the political and economic forces of colonialism were simply too powerful for them to create that new world.

2.3.3 Labor Migration

It could quite conceivably be argued that labor migration to the farms and mines of South Africa and Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia) influenced the Batswana at least as much as, or even more than missionary teaching. Already prior to the formation of the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885, adult Batswana men were leaving their homes to work in South Africa. But this trend only increased under colonial rule (Schapera 1947:43). The colonial policy of deliberate under-development (especially of the agriculture sector) along with taxation made it mandatory for most Batswana men to travel to South African mines and farms in order to obtain cash to pay their taxes as well as supply their families with material necessities (Picard 1987:97-118). Among the serious affects of labor migration was that it served to encourage individualism while also destroying a person’s sense of worth and their connection to the past. Hoyt Alverson (1978:227) records the bitter words of an elderly mine worker: “The most important thing is that mine life destroys a person’s humanity. There is no freedom there. There is no civility. The only way to survive in the mine is to remember why you are there – to earn money. But the oppression makes you weak and creates hatred among fellow workers”. Many returned home with a sense of loss, dehumanized and feeling unsure of their place in the world.⁸

⁸ Bessie Head (1977:92) provides a powerful summary of the effect on the individual: “The colonial era and the period of migratory mining labour to South Africa was a further affliction visited on this man. It broke the hold of the ancestors. It broke the old, traditional form of family life and for long periods a man was separated from his wife and children while he worked for a pittance in another land in order to raise the money to pay his British colonial poll-tax. He then became ‘the boy’ of the white man and a machine-tool of the South African mines”.

The commoditization of their time and labor taught men new work patterns and created autonomy from tribal structures. “Much of the collective security of communal obligation had been supplanted by a system that has made some richer and many poorer than they were before” (Alverson 1978:63). Not only was there psychological trauma for the individual, but the entire community was affected. Agriculture output was impacted as the work was often left to women and children. Family life was severely disrupted as marriages were delayed, children born out of wedlock, infidelity increased, child discipline suffered and women began to set up their own households (Schapera 1947:165-193). The young were no longer being taught the customs of the ancestors, and communal shame was no longer the same motivator it once was.

2.3.4 Witchcraft and Sorcery

It is not surprising that this combination of changes introduced by missionaries, colonial authorities and labor migration created serious disruption in all aspects of community life. In an effort to deal with this situation, Batswana relied upon their understanding of the created order and their traditional healers. Witchcraft or sorcery (*bolo*) was intimately concerned with social relationships and the attempt to overpower another either actively by introducing poisons into an intended victim’s food, or passively by means of malevolent feelings of jealousy or anger (Setiloane 1976:49-50). To discover the causes of misfortune, help restore health and harmony as well as to provide guidance in uncertain times was the task of the traditional doctor, *ngaka*.

The traditional doctors claimed a calling from God and relied upon empowerment by the ancestors to perform their tasks. In addition to providing healing remedies, they were also believed to be able to protect and fortify one against witchcraft by means of their rites and medicines, and foretell the future by means of “casting the bones” (Schapera 1953:63-65). In the face of fierce opposition from both missionaries (who believed they were agents of Satan) and colonial officials (who held their beliefs to be useless superstition), the traditional doctors, and the concomitant belief in witchcraft, not only persisted but grew in popularity (Campbell 1968:9-13).

Commenting on the situation within the mission churches at this time, Gabriel Setiloane (1976) argued that many Batswana Christians had learned, consciously or unconsciously, to balance both the traditional Setswana and modern Western worldviews in their daily lives. He puts it well: “Without thought as to their relationship, ‘mekgwa’ (Setswana custom) and the official ways of the Church exist side by side, as two suits of clothes to be worn on different occasions and sometimes even together at the same time” (:225). The Christianity offered by the missionaries was only partially acceptable to the Batswana, and left many questions unanswered. As one traditional doctor told Bessie Head (1977:52), “The church doesn’t know everything.... The trouble comes from Tswana custom and it is only Tswana medicine that can help you”. Two ideologies were running side by side, each producing truth by means of their tactics, technologies, symbolism and rituals, with the result that many Batswana were left confused and adrift.

2.3.5 Independence

As mentioned in the introductory chapter (1.2.3), the potential for a prosperous future did not look bright for the Republic of Botswana at the time of independence in 1966. It was a country lacking two major ingredients necessary for economic growth: exploitable natural resources and a skilled workforce. Danevad (1993:8) sums up the situation:

[T]he British rulers had made nearly no efforts to industrialise, modernise agriculture, or develop infrastructure. The Batswana majority based their livelihood on subsistence agriculture, hunting and gathering, small-scale cattle rearing, and temporary migration to South African mines. There was also a small economic elite of Batswana and European settlers, prospering on arable farming and large herds of cattle.

This privileged group of wealthy leaders, closely connected to traditional sources of chiefly power, formed the Botswana Democratic Party and eventually led Botswana into the future. Given legitimacy by the first president, Seretse Khama, a wealthy, well-educated, hereditary chief of one of the largest tribes in the Republic, Botswana quickly achieved political stability (Samatar 1999:71). But few could have foreseen the remarkably quick turnaround in the country’s prospects.

It was the fortuitous discovery of diamonds and the careful management of the wealth created that led to a future radically different from what had been predicted. Rapid development of infrastructure and various health and educational services led to a better quality of life for many. In terms of education, primary school enrollment in 1997 had increased to almost 100% from 42% in 1971, junior secondary enrollment had jumped to over 45% from just 7.3% (UNDP 2000:70-71). The University of Botswana (non-existent at Independence) increased its number of students from 520 in 1977 to over 5000 by 1994 (Kwape 1997:221). Rapid development of infrastructure, including the provision of primary health care facilities, clean water supplies, roads and housing, has led to “improving social and health indicators that are vastly superior to most Sub-Saharan African countries” (Mugabe 1997:179).

A major increase in the rate of urbanization, faster than any other African nation, has accompanied the provision of quality social services (Republic of Botswana 1999:35). Only 4% of Botswana lived in towns in 1966, whereas rural and urban populations had almost equalized by 1999 (UNDP 2000:72-73). Growth has been most pronounced in Gaborone which has grown from an estimated 12,000 at Independence (Republic of Botswana 1966b:1) to over 175,000 by 2000 (UNDP 2000:82). With the country experiencing a prolonged period of economic growth fewer people left the country to find employment, opting instead to migrate to the populated areas of Botswana. Reflecting the shift towards diamond mining and urbanization, the economic importance of agriculture has drastically declined over this period as reflected by its drop from 40% of the country's GDP in 1966 to just 3% by 2003 (UNDP 2005:15).

One other factor in the rapid rate of urbanization has been Botswana's quickly expanding population. Although the population is still extremely small (1.8 million) in comparison to its landmass, it is significant that from Independence to 1991 the population was growing at close to 4% a year, one of the fastest rates in the world. By 1991 nearly half the population was under 15 years of age. This rapid growth has posed challenges to government resources as well as to the ability of families to provide adequate care for children. At this point we would do well to note that Botswana's

economic development has not helped all members of society equally. There is abundant evidence that the cattle-owning elite of the colonial era, and their descendents, have used their political power for their own economic benefit (Picard 1987:252-264; Samatar 1999:67-75). Since 1975 the number of those living below the officially defined poverty line has remained fairly constant at close to 50% (Republic of Botswana 1998:3; UNDP 2005:18), while a minority have grown richer. Poverty levels in the rural areas are higher than those of the urban centres but large pockets of impoverished people live in Gaborone and other towns as well.

Some of the negative effects of rapid urbanization, unequal distribution of wealth and a widening generational gap have become increasingly obvious. Traditional patterns of family support began to show signs of breaking down while family structures have changed considerably as well. By 1991 almost half (47%) of all households were headed by women, where the levels of poverty were also highest (Mugabe 1997:180). Young people felt less constrained by parental control as attested to by the increase in the percentage of pregnant teenage girls (Mazonde 1997:67-68). The loss of male authority and responsibility noted earlier seems to have increased as many men began to move easily from one relationship to another (see Gulbrandsen 1994:256-267). All of these factors have led to the extremely alarming HIV/AIDS crisis that Botswana faces today. Along with a seeming loss of respect for male authority has been erosion in the powers of traditional leadership structures. The process that began with the loss of their spiritual authority to missionaries, and a portion of their political authority to colonial officials, sped up following Independence. With the establishment of new administrative institutions by the newly elected Botswana Democratic party, the chiefs became government employees, thus diminishing their status considerably (see Tlou & Campbell 1997:248-56, 334-338). In urban settings, they have largely become irrelevant, and in rural settings, they have been contemptuously referred to as ignorant “big stomachs”, people who have grown fat in town and lost touch with the rural people (Alverson 1978:72).

It is not surprising then, in this context of changing societal patterns and norms, that the belief in witchcraft also increased. Often in contexts of widening disparities between rich and poor, urban and rural, witchcraft becomes more common and widespread (J & J Comaroff 1993:xxiv-xxvi). Bessie Head (1977:47) describes the situation as follows:

Political independence seemed to have aggravated the disease more than anything because people now said: 'Our old people used to say that you can't kill someone who is not your relative. You know what you are going to take from your relative. But these days they are killing everyone from jealousy'.

The power of witchcraft, of jealousy, explains many things in a context of social change and upheaval. The popularity of traditional doctors has continued to grow even as people's levels of Westernized education have risen. The need for an explanation in times of change, and protection from evil powers has become acute for many.

2.3.6 External Ecclesiastical Influences

Beyond the influence of Western missionaries, the role of African-born evangelists should also be noted. Many of the larger ASCs found in Botswana today were either started by ASC prophets and healers from South Africa or Zimbabwe, or they are the result of migrant laborers returning from South Africa with a gospel message that had relevance for Botswana communities (Amanze 1998:62-88). With large numbers of Botswana traveling to South Africa to live and work during the years of 1945-75, it was practically inevitable that they would be impacted by the ecclesiastical and political ferment taking place within that country. Many discovered that the ASC gospel dealt seriously with their spiritual and social needs in ways they could understand and appreciate. In order to be a Christian, they did not have to forsake their African culture, or practice traditional customs in secret. They experienced a new freedom and power in their lives. The number of ASCs had increased rapidly just prior to and after Independence as the chiefs and colonial powers stopped trying to stamp out the movement (Amanze 1998:85-86) while mission churches continued to exert considerable influence. But mission and Spiritual churches were not the only church bodies active in the country.

By Independence, denominations such as the Assemblies of God, Apostolic Faith Mission, Pentecostal Holiness and Pentecostal Protestant Church had all formed branches around the country although they had not yet become very influential (Amanze 1998:43-51). But in 1975 an auspicious event was to take place in Gaborone. In April of that year, a young German missionary named Reinhard Bonnke with a vision that “all Africa shall be saved” arrived to conduct an evangelistic and healing crusade. Things started slowly for the unknown evangelist,⁹ with just one church participating and only 100 people attending the first night. But while Bonnke was still preaching, people began jumping up and claiming to be healed. Later during the prayer time a number of people fell down under the power of God, amazing many in the congregation. The results of the first night’s events were dramatic and soon many more began flocking to the meetings. By the end of the two week crusade, the 10,000 seat national stadium was filled to capacity (Steele 1987:48-50). In a personal interview, Professor Nkomazana of the University of Botswana suggests that this crusade marked a turning point in Pentecostal history in Botswana.¹⁰ Up to this point most Pentecostal churches had not been very visible but this event focused a great deal of attention on the movement. Furthermore it also impacted large numbers of young people, many of them students at secondary schools or the University of Botswana. What they had seen began to filter into the churches with one Pentecostal leader claiming twelve years after the original crusade “that eighty percent of his current pastors were converts from that first crusade in Gaborones (sic)” (Christ for All Nations). Parachurch organizations like Scripture Union, a Christian organization geared to reaching young people through school-based programmes, were also affected.

What had they seen and heard? According to Bonnke’s biographer, Ron Steele (1987:49-51), the most significant aspects of the crusade were the demonstrations of power including healings and speaking in tongues. For Bonnke, baptism in the Spirit is

⁹ Bonnke’s ministry, now known as Christ for All Nations, and his fame has expanded incredibly since 1975. Often he speaks to crowds in excess of 100,000 during his crusades throughout Africa. During one particular crusade in Lagos, Nigeria, 1.6 million people came to a single meeting with over 6 million attending over the course of the five day event (Christ for All Nations 2008).

¹⁰ Personal Interview (12 April 2002).

a necessary condition before a believer can really experience the power of God. Nkomazana suggests that this crusade set the stage for more of the same kind of events in the future. When Bonnke organized a gathering of more than 4000 evangelists and pastors from all across Africa in Harare in 1985 (Steele 1987:229-233), many Batswana also attended, including D.D. Monnakgosi, founder of Goodnews Ministries. At this event a number of prominent charismatic and prosperity gospel teachers from America were also present, and so in this way were able to pass on their teaching to Pentecostal churches in Botswana.

In this discussion of the Botswana context, I have sought to point out the impact missionaries (Western and African), colonial policies, migrant labor, political independence, economic development, urbanization and AIDS have had on Botswana life. What has become evident is that the Batswana have seen their worldview challenged, and been forced to change, but have also reacted in creative ways to retain what they perceived as essential from their cultural tradition. Some of this creativity will become evident in the stories of conversion and church origins related in the following section. At the same time, it will also become clear that the identity and ethos of these churches has been profoundly shaped by the various dynamics occurring within the Botswana context.

2.4 The Founders And Their Churches

2.4.1 Hermon Church¹¹

Joel Montsho Madimabe, the founder of the Hermon Church (HC) was born on 19 August 1937 in the village of Tutume (in the northeast of Botswana), and had little contact with Christianity as his father was a traditional doctor who “threw the bones” (*bola ditaola*). Although he was expected to follow in his father’s footsteps, he had his first sustained church connection in 1955 when he met some members of the Methodist

¹¹ Much of the information that follows was related in personal interviews with Archbishop JM Madimabe (22 September 2003; 14 November 2003, 7 July 2007), his second wife, Sentswela Madimabe (23 September 2003; 13 November 2003) and Vice-Bishop Isaak Tsholofelo (14 November 2003).

Church in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe where he had gone to work on a white-owned farm. Sometime during the following two years, he was baptized and joined the church. Near the end of 1958, he moved back to Botswana, settling in Francistown where he was employed as a cook. Around a year later, on 18 October 1959, a most remarkable event took place in his life. In the weeks prior, the Head Mountain of God Apostolic Church in Zion¹², an ASC with roots in South Africa, began conducting evangelistic services on the outskirts of the town. Madimabe was both attracted by the church as well as dismissive of its claims to have spiritual power, and so he went down to the river with a friend to observe what the Head Mountain Church members were doing. He even displayed his opposition by harassing them, going so far as to curse them and throw stones. He felt protected because he had his traditional medicines in his trouser pockets (according to Madimabe, the Methodist Church did not forbid their use).

But that day something happened to him. At one moment he was mocking the church, and the next he found himself “in the Spirit” (*mo Moweng*). He was dizzy, and he must have stumbled down to where the church members had gathered. A prophet immediately uncovered the hidden traditional medicines and soon after, another revealed that Madimabe had a demon. They prayed over him, beat him with their staffs, and before long the demon was expelled and he became calm. They then baptized him by immersion in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He came out of the water prophesying and speaking in tongues. He has no explanation for this event except that he was “seized by the Spirit” (*o tshwerwe ke Moya*) and compelled to enter the river. Upon realizing what had happened, he thought the church members would be angry for his past behaviour but instead they forgave him. At his baptism, they gave him a new biblical name, Joel, perhaps a reference to the work of the Spirit in his life (see Joel 2:28-29). In addition, the prophet instructed a pastor from the Head Mountain Church to accompany him home to the Monarch location in Francistown. The pastor, Rev. Rabalese, stayed with him for 7 days, praying throughout this time.

¹² See Kealotswe (1994) for an account of the origins and development of the Head Mountain of God Apostolic Church in Zion. The founder of the church, Smart Mthembu, had gone to South Africa as a migrant laborer, and while there experienced God’s call on his life. After a number of visits, he returned home to northeastern Botswana permanently in 1948 to help establish the new church.

Soon after, Madimabe returned home to Tutume to take care of his father's cattle, telling them of his decision to become a member of the Head Mountain Church. But before long, he found himself with a problem. Whenever he drank milk from his father's cows, his stomach became painful and he found that he had to vomit, but when he drank milk from his friend's cows there was no problem. Madimabe returned to the Head Mountain Church in Francistown and asked for their help. After an extended time of prayer, it was revealed that his step-mother (Madimabe's mother had died in 1947) and her sister were bewitching him. For two weeks church members met with him for prayer, and gave him blessed water to drink. He was then told to return home, whereupon he discovered that he could drink milk from his father's cows without any difficulty. When asked what he did about the witchcraft accusation against his step-mother and sister, he says he simply forgave them.

Following that incident, Madimabe returned to Francistown to work for the De Beers mining company and then eventually moved over to the veterinary department of the British colonial government. In 1963, he was stationed near the village of Makalamabedi, not far from Maun in the northwestern section of Botswana. While there, he began to preach in the village and pray for people to be healed. He treated the ill with blessed water to drink, and many were converted and healed. Later in 1963 he returned to Francistown, living in the Monarch location. There was already a Head Mountain congregation but it was located on the opposite side of the river from where he was living. When the rains fell, the river became impassable and for a month no one could cross it in order to go to church. Madimabe felt "compelled by the Spirit" to meet with people for prayer – he tells of a deep pain in his heart for those who were suffering with various forms of disease, and he used to fall down under the power of the Spirit. So he began to meet with people in that location, along with some of those whom he had baptized in Makalamabedi. Unfortunately the establishment of a new branch was not approved by the Head Mountain of God church leadership and he was expelled from the denomination. For a period of time he continued meeting with his congregation of around 35 people, and also married his first wife, Thapawana Madimabe, in 1964 (who died in 2003).

In 1965, he felt that he needed to connect with an established church and so he traveled to the village of Serowe, capital of the Bamangwato tribe. He prayed for guidance and eventually connected with Archbishop George T. Gojamu of the Holy Sarda Apostolic Church. Madimabe's congregation officially became members of Gojamu's church. While in Serowe, a man came to him from the village of Sefophe (about 100 kilometres southeast of Francistown) and asked for prayer as he was unwell. Shortly after praying for him, the man recovered and then asked Madimabe to go to Sefophe with him. On 4 January 1968, Madimabe arrived in Sefophe for the first time and met with some people for prayer in the fields near the village. The next day, the village chief, M. Segwabe, met with him and gave him freedom to start a branch of the Holy Sarda Apostolic Church in the village.

The move to Sefophe was not without some risk as he was moving from an area where his tribal group, the Kalanga, were the definite majority to a village long-controlled by the Bamangwato tribe. This entailed not only a change in location but also a language transition from Ikalanga to speaking almost exclusively in Setswana. He also suffered economically as the cattle and goats he had brought with him from his home area disappeared shortly after his arrival. Some blamed his loss on witchcraft, but Madimabe saw it as a test from God. He remained steadfast in his faith through these trials. He still holds fast to one of his favorite hymns, *Ke na le Modisa* ("I have a Good Shepherd" – based on Psalm 23),¹³ because it sustained him during this turbulent period in his life.

As for the church, their initial efforts were quite well received and they enjoyed considerable success in evangelizing and praying for villagers. But in March 1969 Madimabe was taken to the village court (*kgotla*) and charged with beating a man with a staff while in church. Madimabe claims that he was innocent of the charge but others

¹³ Hymn #111 in *Difela tsa Sione*. Having undergone numerous revisions, this Sesotho hymnbook was first published in 1844 by French Protestant missionaries in Lesotho. It has been appropriated by many ASCs in southern Africa as their hymnbook. The title, *Lifela tsa Sione* (Songs of Zion), lends itself to the movement.

disagreed and the chief decided that the church should be closed. Shortly after, Madimabe's first child became very ill with the measles, and so his wife went to the chief to complain. She found him conversing with some leading men from the village, but still she had the audacity to rebuke him publicly for closing the church, resulting in the dire condition of their child. The chief asked, "What does the child need?" Thapawana Madimabe replied, "Only prayer!" The chief wanted to see the child immediately and, once he saw her, ordered that they play the drums (*letsa meropa*) and pray. As soon as the people heard the drums, many gathered at the Madimabe home, while the chief returned to visiting with his advisors. When some people complained, Kgosi Segwabe made an important declaration: "Seretse Khama has freed the churches. If someone has a problem with that, they should go to Seretse Khama!"¹⁴ The child immediately recovered and is alive to this day.

Until 1973, Madimabe and his congregation remained fully affiliated with the Holy Sarda Apostolic Church. His reputation as a healer and prophet had grown considerably during those years and people came from some distance to seek his help. However, during that same year, he and some other leaders became concerned about the finances of the church and queried Archbishop Gojamu about what had happened to the money that was intended to help the poor. They did not receive a satisfactory answer, so their Chief encouraged them to break away and form their own church. Sensing that God was leading in this direction, three other key leaders joined Madimabe: John Mogapi, Isaac Tsholofelo and John Terena. The four met to ask God to reveal a name for the church. They spent the night in prayer and in the morning when they came together, each shared what they had heard from God. The names the other three had received were already taken by other churches or else too close to allow for a clear identity. Madimabe then shared what he had received – the Hermon Church along with Psalm 133. When the other leaders heard the words of the Psalm,

¹⁴ Sir Seretse Khama was the first President of the Republic of Botswana. He is credited for enshrining freedom to choose one's religion in the original constitution of the country. Under the section dealing with freedom of conscience, the Botswana constitution guarantees "freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom...to propagate his religion" (Republic of Botswana 1966a: Chapter 1, p. 14).

they agreed that God was calling them to unify and work together. The close linkage of church unity, the imagery of Zion and their church name, Hermon, was immediately apparent upon reading this biblical text (NIV):

How good and pleasant it is
 when brothers live together in unity!
It is like precious oil poured on the head,
 running down the beard,
 running down on Aaron's beard,
 down upon the collar of his robes.
It is as if the *dew of Hermon*
 were falling on *Mount Zion*.
For there the Lord bestows his blessing,
 even life forevermore (emphasis mine).

This Psalm continues to function as a key identity marker for the Hermon Church to this day. Over time, the following emerged as the primary objectives of the church: preach the Word of God so that people may receive the power of the Holy Spirit, encourage the development efforts of the country and pray for the sick to receive healing. The Hermon Church (HC) was officially registered with the government of Botswana on 26 April 1979. Already in 1974 there were four branches of the church in the country, and today they have 24 branches with a membership of around 5200.¹⁵

2.4.2 Revelation Blessed Peace¹⁶

The Revelation Blessed Church (RBP) separated from the Spiritual Healing Church¹⁷ in 1973, and was officially registered in Botswana in March of 1976. There are 63 branches of the church located in four regions of the country. Although church

¹⁵ These figures were given to me by Archbishop Madimabe in 2007. Amanze (1994:132) listed 14 branches with a membership of 3500. From my visits to church locations around the country, I would suggest that these numbers are probably somewhat inflated.

¹⁶ The information that follows is based on personal interviews with Archbishop Tshwaranang M. Kepeletswe, son of the founder of the church (2 November 2003), Senior Minister Boiketlo Ngwako (13 June 2005) and a report by Rev. Lekula Mosima (1984).

¹⁷ James Amanze (1994:251;1998:78-79) provides some brief notes on the history and doctrine of the Spiritual Healing Church. For a more detailed history, see Rachel Hilty-Friesen (1990; 1993).

membership may have approached 5500 in 1982 (Mosima 1984:70), since the death of the founder in 1988, membership has probably fallen off to 3500-4000 at present. The headquarters of the church is in Kgagodi village, located in eastern Botswana. The founder of the church, Matlho Kapaletswe Dichaba, was born in Kgagodi in 1916. He was well educated for his time, attaining standard VI in his home village and then completing his Junior Certificate through correspondence. Like many other Batswana men, he left Botswana to work in the gold mines of Johannesburg in 1943. Not long after his arrival, he came into contact with the African Apostolic Church of South Africa where church prophets warned him of an impending mine disaster. He asked for prayer and his life was spared when a mine collapsed killing more than 50 workers on 25 February 1943. Interpreting this event as divine intervention in his life, he committed his life to God and joined the African Apostolic Church through baptism by immersion on 15 March 1943.

Dichaba was soon commissioned to preach the gospel and pray for the sick. He immediately began to receive visions and prophesy. In 1947, he decided to return to Kgagodi to start a new church, but he was instructed by God to refrain from public meetings until the opportune time. At that point, the tribal leaders, members of the London Missionary Society, still exercised considerable authority and they were opposed to the formation of new churches. He waited for five years, praying secretly, until God revealed to him that people in the village would be attacked by a disease, and that Dichaba should minister to them through prayer and water. In January of 1952, the vision came to pass. After a short period of time, he was eventually given permission by the tribal leaders to start a prayer and healing meeting. Soon, as many as 500 people felt called by the Holy Spirit to join with him in following God.

In 1953, Dichaba traveled to Matsiloje, headquarters of the Spiritual Healing Church, to visit Bishop Jacob Mokaleng. Through separate visions, the two men sensed that God was leading them to work together, so Dichaba joined the Spiritual Healing Church. Although both leaders experienced considerable opposition from mission church leaders, and even incarceration at the hands of colonial officials and

tribal leaders, they persisted in their vision and reportedly witnessed many powerful acts of God. The church continued to grow and spread throughout Botswana as well as into neighboring countries. Dichaba was renowned for his prophetic gifts and healing ministry, leading people to flock from around the country to seek his assistance.

Unfortunately, the close relationship between Dichaba and Mokaleng unraveled in 1973 when Bishop Mokaleng publicly revealed two prophecies which created division in the church. In the first vision, he beat a woman to death for trying to divide the church, while in the second he reportedly saw Bishop Dichaba flat on his back with rain falling on him. This dream was interpreted to mean that Dichaba was going to die (Amanze 1994:234). Many church members knew that Bishop Mokaleng wanted his son, Israel, to succeed him as leader of the church, and the visions were viewed as attempts to undermine Dichaba's standing in the church. Although attempts were made to reconcile, the rift could not be healed. Dichaba, along with around 2000 of his followers, left later in 1973. The church then organized itself and began to spread throughout the country. Throughout its history it has held to its primary objectives of praying for the sick, preaching the Word of God, and baptizing those who believe. According to the present Archbishop, Tshwaranang M. Kepeletswe (son of the founder), a healing ministry is of key importance for a church to experience growth. Since the death of the founder, there seems to have been a drop-off in healing and prophetic activity, leading to the gradual decline in church membership.

2.4.3 Goodnews Ministries¹⁸

The history of Goodnews Ministries (GM) is closely intertwined with that of its dynamic founder, Dithapelo D. Monnakgosi. Monnakgosi, born 17 February 1952 in the small southern Botswana village of Mankgodi, was active in the Roman Catholic Church throughout his youth and young adulthood. Monnakgosi's father had actually planned to become a Roman Catholic priest but his father (Monnakgosi's grandfather) refused to

¹⁸ The information recorded here was related in personal interviews with Apostle D.D. Monnakgosi (7 May 2002; 6 October 2003; 6 July 2005; and 12 July 2007) and Professor Fidelis Nkomozana (12 April 2002).

allow him to do so. Nevertheless Monnakgosi's father remained active in the Roman Catholic Church even as his mother retained her membership in the Lutheran Church. Their family was quite poor as their main source of income was derived from subsistence farming and the income his father procured as a migrant laborer. Although Monnakgosi only started attending school at age 11, he was able to complete his primary education in 1969, and then his Junior Certificate and Ordinary Level at Seepapitso Secondary School (Kanye) in 1975. The next step in his education took him to Swaziland where he completed his Higher National Diploma in Mechanical Engineering. Upon completing his studies he returned to Botswana where he has worked with various organizations, eventually settling with the University of Botswana where he worked as a senior technician until 2005. He is married (Elizabeth) and has three children: Hope (1984), Faith (1986) and Charity (1989).

In his youth, Monnakgosi was an active member and a youth leader in the Roman Catholic Church, but he claims he received little spiritual input from the church. For Monnakgosi, the pivotal date of his life is 7 June 1973, the day he was "saved" or "born again". After his conversion experience he remained in the church for another 14 years until finally leaving in August of 1987. According to Monnakgosi, when he informed his parents of his conversion experience, his father was quite upset and chased him out of the house. Later he told his father that he was serious about his faith, explaining that "God had changed him through revelation; he had not been preached to, nor taught to pray." Monnakgosi's claims to have heard directly from God did not sit well with his father who claimed he was rebelling. As he was the eldest son, he was expected to abide by his father's beliefs. Monnakgosi told his father he could no longer participate in traditional rites, use traditional medicine (*muti*) or wear protective charms (*diphoko*). His father responded as follows: "You don't believe in my gods/ancestors (*badimo*), you don't believe in my church (Roman Catholic), you have to go." Monnakgosi then returned to school and prayed, "Holy Spirit, help!" In response, he heard the Spirit ask, "Who is your Father?" Confident of God the Father's love for him, he continued in his studies and in his commitment to Christ.

Five years after his conversion (14 November 1978) Monnakgosi was involved in a horrific automobile accident. According to Monnakgosi, he was rushed to hospital where he was confirmed dead on arrival by a number of doctors and nurses. But after “four and a half hours, with all the blood and windscreen pieces, I rose from the dead” (Kelebonye 1999:11). Understandably this caused quite a stir but his health problems were far from over. A few weeks later he was discharged from the hospital as a hopeless invalid, unable to feed himself or turn on his bed. However, not long after his return home, he was taken to hear a traveling evangelist in Gaborone. He was prayed for but no change was immediately evident. The next morning, though, he could use his hand and when he tried to speak, his broken jaw now moved with ease. Monnakgosi credits God with raising him from the dead and restoring his health.

The following year, in 1979, while attending a special revival meeting, he was baptized with the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues. He refers to this as the “most precious time in his life”. He prayed and cried out to God, locking himself in a room. Following this experience, he began to experience a prophetic anointing on his life as he was given numerous visions from God. Having never received biblical or theological training, Monnakgosi was adamant that what he shares is directly from God. Following his baptism in the Spirit, he explains that he heard God tell him to “Destroy ignorance”. God went on to instruct him: “I’ve given you a syringe and you are to inject people with it. From now on, listen to the words that come from your mouth.” It was clear to Monnakgosi that he was to inject people with the Word of God, for the “truth shall set you free” (Jn. 8:32). This combination of prophetic revelation and a commitment to the Bible have characterized his subsequent ministry.

Prior to the inauguration of GM, Monnakgosi was extremely involved with CHIRO, the Catholic Youth Movement, serving as both vice president and president of the organization. In addition he provided leadership for both Scripture Union (interdenominational Christian group for junior and secondary students) as well as the Scripture Union Action groups (for post-secondary school students). During this period the group grew from just a handful of students to well over 400 in the Gaborone area

alone. He had a tremendous longing to see children and young people commit to following Christ. Professor Nkomozana noted that he often preached in schools, and held all night “camp meetings” and conferences. He would travel at his own expense throughout the country to meet with young people for prayer and counseling. Already in the 1980s, students showed their love for him by referring to him as “Daddy”, a title many church members still use today. According to Monnakgosi it was not his intention to be a pastor or start a new church. However in 1980 he had a vision from God of a large building (two stories) filled with young people. In subsequent visions over the following years the name of the church and the church emblem were also revealed to him. The emphasis was on forming an organization that would encompass a number of ministries: prison ministry, hospital outreach, poverty alleviation, children’s and youth ministry, education and television outreach.

It was not until 18 March 1990, however, that Monnakgosi formally began church meetings on the campus of the University of Botswana. The first service was small with only 10 adults and 5 children attending. But within a very short time it was attracting large crowds as numerous reports were made of miraculous healings and exorcisms. In addition he strongly encouraged his followers to reach out to their neighbors. Monnakgosi stressed that “the church must be visionary, have a direction, have a purpose. We need to know why we are here, why we are born again – we have a mission!”¹⁹ The vision of the church comprises three components: restoration – bringing people back to God; evangelism – reaching out to the unsaved; and development of a holy lifestyle. A common refrain is that there should be “no compromise” with regard to the Word of God, the vision of the church or temptations of the world.

The church was not without controversy, however, and it faced considerable opposition from various quarters. Some leading Christians in the country took offense at Monnakgosi’s charismatic teachings, moralistic bent and his popularity with the younger generation. Clearly there was considerable concern that many youth would

¹⁹ AM Service (26 January 2003)

leave their old churches for this upstart church with its focus on deliverance and healing (Kelebonye 1999:12-13). But after a protracted battle, the church was able to register with the government on 27 May 1992. Monnakgosi proudly claims that it was the first church of its kind started in Botswana by a Motswana. Although I was not able to confirm the growth pattern of the church, it has been suggested that the Gaborone GM congregation initially experienced rather phenomenal numerical increase before leveling off after the first few years. This plateau in membership most likely took place because it was around this time (1996) that GM began to open new branches throughout the country. While Gaborone remained central, the church was expanding rapidly into new areas and now boasts 36 branches (2007). Various approximations of membership figures were provided during the course of this study ranging from 2500-5000. As I did not conduct a survey of all church branches, I am unable to confirm or deny the validity of the figures given to me. Considering that the attendance in Gaborone averages around 250 each Sunday, and that most of the branches are smaller (usually around 30-50 people), it would seem that this estimate is likely somewhat inflated.

2.4.4 Bible Life Ministries²⁰

Bible Life Ministries (BLM) was introduced to Botswana in August of 1987 by Dr. Enock Sitima²¹ (born 1958), a Malawian national, and his Motswana wife, Tshegofatso. Sunday morning worship services began on 10 January 1988 with just 10 people attending the original meeting. By 1991 the congregation had grown to 500 with a membership of approximately 300. In 2008, the congregation in Gaborone numbered over 3000 with approximately 1500 members comprised of people from over 30 different nationalities, and is now recognized as the largest single congregation in the city. Furthermore, the ministry has expanded with 20 additional branches in the country

²⁰ Much of this information was gained from personal interviews with church leaders E. Sitima (23 April and 17 May 2002), T. Sitima (14 May 2002) and M. Phuthego (11 May 2002). BLM's website (<http://biblelife.org.bw/BibleLife.html>) is also helpful.

²¹ Dr. Sitima does not have an earned doctorate. He uses the appellation to signify his position and authority in the church.

and sub-region (in Zambia, Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland), a fully functional Bible school and a variety of social ministries.

Dr. Sitima was originally invited to come to Botswana in 1984 to address a group of students at the University of Botswana as well as other groups including the Scripture Union. Although raised in a climate of poverty in Blantyre, he was by that time employed as an assistant manager of the Bata Shoe Company in Malawi, while also engaging in ministry on a voluntary basis. Originally from the Seventh Day Adventist Church, he had experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit and begun to speak in tongues in 1980 when he joined the Assemblies of God. Tshegofatso Sitima, his future wife, was at that time actively involved in the Scripture Union and a member of the Pentecostal Holiness Church. During his visit, they met and were married in 1985. Shortly thereafter Mrs. Sitima went to the United States to study at Cornell University. Dr. Sitima followed and helped establish a Pentecostal church in Ithaca, New York.

During their years in the United States (1985-1987), Dr. Sitima developed a close relationship with Doyle “Buddy” Harrison of Faith Christian Fellowship International, an associate of the well-known prosperity preacher, Kenneth Haggin, Sr. According to Tshegofatso Sitima (Dr. Sitima’s wife and now an ordained pastor at BLM), it was while in the United States that they felt God’s call to establish a vibrant, success-orientated church in Botswana, one that would meet the needs of young people and reach out to professionals. Dr. M. Phuthego, one of the founding members of BLM, states that it is the vision of the full and abundant life, as Jesus promised his disciples in John 10:10, that has guided this ministry from its inception. That vision has been articulated as follows: “Bible Life Ministries Mission is to bring God’s life to people in a manner that is practical and relevant to the society and its needs; the mandate is being fulfilled in everything that the ministry sets forth to do” (Bannerman 2000:98).

2.5 Comparing Origins And “Call Stories”

2.5.1 Background Of Leaders

In light of the material presented in the discussion of the Botswana context, it is not surprising to see certain themes emerging in the “call stories” of these church founders, such as the influence of migrant labor, conflict with tribal leadership and mission churches as well as issues of a spiritual nature like witchcraft, dreams and divine healing. In the following comparative analysis, I will focus on the Botswana context, keeping in mind that the birthdates of the four leaders are separated by over 50 years: Dichaba (1916) and Madimabe (1937) of the ASCs, Monnakgosi (1952) and Sitima (1958) of the NPCs. The considerable spread between the leaders’ ages is important on account of its impact on their education, work experience, place of residence (rural versus urban) and connections with foreign ideas and individuals. The ASC leaders, Dichaba and Madimabe, started churches at a time when most Batswana lived in villages, few educational and medical facilities were available and travel beyond southern Africa was extremely rare. That said, it is noteworthy that all four founders, including the NPC leaders, grew up in relative poverty. Unlike Sitima, the three Batswana men were all raised in rural areas, and all had connections to migrant labor. The key difference in this regard is that while the ASC leaders, Dichaba and Madimabe, both worked in foreign countries, it was Monnakgosi’s father who worked in South Africa. Although Monnakgosi would eventually leave Botswana, it was not to work but to attend university.

When considering the education levels of the leaders, key differences begin to become apparent. Once Monnakgosi began to attend junior secondary school, he left the village and began to live in urban settings. Likewise, Sitima, having been raised in the city of Blantyre, has little experience with village life. Dichaba and Monnakgosi, on the other hand, received much less formal education than the two NPC founders. In addition, while the two men lived in cities during their migrant labor years, both returned to rural life. Here is where one sees the influence of rapid urbanization in Botswana following Independence. The thought patterns of the ASC leaders were heavily shaped by village life and migrant labor, whereas the NPC leaders were formally educated men, orientated towards urban realities.

With regard to their backgrounds, their connection to mission churches and/or other ASCs is another important consideration. Their sense of call to start a new church did not arise out of a vacuum. Dichaba was heavily impacted by his encounter with the African Apostolic Church in Johannesburg, although he most likely had learned something of Christianity earlier through contact with the London Missionary Society. Madimabe also had considerable contact with various churches (Methodist, Head Mountain of God and Holy Sarda) prior to founding the Hermon Church. Monnakgosi was heavily involved in the Roman Catholic Church both prior to and following his conversion experience in 1973, and was clearly influenced by contact with noted Pentecostal evangelists like Reinhard Bonnke. Sitima also came out of a mission church background, first with the Seventh Day Adventists and then the Assemblies of God.

Although all of these leaders seem to downplay the role mission churches played in their spiritual development, some more vehemently than others (e.g., Monnakgosi), this aspect of their stories needs further exploration.²² All of these leaders relate a somewhat mystical experience of the Spirit which led to a new direction in life, and a desire to serve others. Apparently this direct connection with God was a missing element in the mission church spirituality these men experienced; they sensed a lack of power. Furthermore, in the stories of both Madimabe (HC) and Monnakgosi (GM), one finds clear examples of the ambivalence towards the Setswana worldview described above (see 2.3). Madimabe claims the Methodist Church did not object to the use of traditional charms and medicines, and Monnakgosi relates that his father was fully devoted to both his ancestors and the Roman Catholic Church. While the missionaries may have tried to eliminate these beliefs from the lives of their converts, it is clear that the Setswana worldview was alive and well within these churches.

2.5.2 Call Experience

²² Daneel (2004:185-190) argues that mission churches have had more to do with the formation and theology of ASCs than is often recognized. He bases his assertions on his work with ASCs in Zimbabwe.

The spiritual element in the call experiences of all these founders is paramount. In terms of establishing a new leader or church, the importance of a supernatural vision or dream, and verification by means of miraculous works of God, be it prophetic gifting or healing, is well recognized (Mwaura 2004:108-109; Marshall 1995:256). All of these leaders describe visions from God, ecstatic experiences, miraculous healings and specific words of prophecy. Monnakgosi claims that God even raised him from the dead.²³ These mystical experiences serve the important role of authenticating the call of God on these men. Their followers could not help but be assured that the Spirit of God rested on their leaders after hearing how God had so powerfully intervened in their lives.

When comparing these “call stories”, it is relatively easy to spot a number of similarities between them. God demonstrated his power in the lives of these leaders by either protecting them from harm (Dichaba), healing them of sickness and witchcraft (Madimabe), raising them from the dead (Monnakgosi) or delivering them from poverty (Sitima). Having personally experienced the presence of the Spirit, they went out and began to perform miracles of healing, prophecy and deliverance. While some have argued that the NPC claim to provide spiritual power to all who have been “born again” leads to the “democratization of religious experience” (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:128), that thesis is difficult to sustain when analyzing these churches. In each of these cases, the work of the Spirit in these men’s lives as displayed in their initial call and subsequent ministry has created a deep connection in the minds of their followers between the church they attend and the leader they serve.

Furthermore it is clear that these leaders have encouraged their followers to rely on them for spiritual power and protection. In both the HC and RBP, church members have been encouraged to seek help and healing at the church headquarters. Archbishop Madimabe reminds his followers, “As children of the Hermon Church, you

²³ Ellis and ter Haar (2004:43) claim that “it is quite common among religious leaders in Africa to claim to have died after serious illness and to have miraculously returned to life, charged by God with a special task”. The experience of Monnakgosi would seem to confirm this assertion.

are my children”.²⁴ In the NPCs, the leaders are even more explicit. Apostle Monnakgosi declares, “By the apostolic anointing upon me, I release the power of God”²⁵, and Dr. Sitima warns his congregation to “never disconnect from your man of God – he’s your connection to power!”²⁶ Like Madimabe, they also view themselves as father-figures for their “family”. Many in GM call Monnakgosi and his wife “Daddy” and “Mommy”, with one member asserting that she is not “a GM church member but a Monnakgosi member.”²⁷ Considering the close linkage between the founder and spiritual power, it is not surprising that RBP membership declined somewhat following the death of Archbishop Dichaba.

This connection between leader and church is understandable in light of the Botswana context. With the steady erosion of respect for men, whether tribal leaders or family heads, many were looking for charismatic prophets and “men of God” to provide them with hope and direction for the future. These men represent a different type of leader – a leader not chosen by genealogy or by the popular will of the masses but one chosen by God. In this sense they are like the traditional doctor (*ngaka*) although all would claim that their Spirit-endowed power is much greater than anything they experienced previously.²⁸ Their spiritual authority is reflected in the titles placed before their names. In the ASCs, leadership borrowed from the mission churches and called their leaders Bishop or Archbishop, while also assuming the biblical role of prophet (*moporofeti*) or seer (*molebi*). In their respective churches, Monnakgosi and Sitima are often referred to as either the Man of God or the Apostle.

²⁴ HC, Sefophe (20 April 2003).

²⁵ GM, Gaborone (24 March 2002).

²⁶ BLM (5 May 2002).

²⁷ K. Motlhageng, Personal Interview (21 June 2005).

²⁸ De Haes (1992:84) description of NPC leaders is applicable here: “The prophet, charismatic leader or founder of one of these new communities appears to his followers as a man powerful in word and deed, stronger than witchdoctors, those strong men of the traditional religions whom the foreign missionaries never managed to vanquish”.

Having focused on a number of similarities in the conversion and call experiences of these leaders, it is also important to note some areas of slight but significant divergence. Primary here is the vocabulary employed to describe their encounters with the Holy Spirit, immediately raising the issue of language differences. Speaking in Setswana, Madimabe describes his experience as having been “seized’ or “laid hold of” by the Spirit (*ke tshwerwe ke Mowa*), and then of being “in the Spirit” (*mo Moweng*), implying a complete loss of control, equivalent to being possessed by a spirit. Preferring to use English, Monnakgosi and Sitima use the biblical expressions “born again” and “baptism of the Spirit”, and separate the two experiences. For the NPC leaders, it is assumed that those “baptized in the Spirit” will speak in tongues. It is important to acknowledge these differences at the outset because while the experiences of these leaders are clearly similar, their interpretation of the events differs. Ideological differences are immediately evident as these leaders use different “tactics” to validate their particular understanding of spiritual power and experience. In the chapters to follow these variations in interpretation will be studied in much more detail. The use of English or Setswana as the primary language will also be analyzed in terms of its significance for how these churches relate to the Setswana and Western worldviews.

2.5.3 Opposition

One of the striking features in all these stories (except for Dr. Sitima’s) is the amount of conflict experienced by these leaders following their conversion experiences, and then again when starting and organizing their churches. Narrowing the focus to Madimabe and Monnakgosi, one finds that they faced serious opposition from family members, suffering rejection, curses and even sorcery. Clearly their decision to align themselves with the God they had so powerfully experienced indicated a change in their allegiances. In both cases, members of their family recognized that they were now rejecting certain aspects of the Setswana worldview, and they sought to prevent them from doing so. Madimabe and Monnakgosi had begun to view the world in a different

way, and in their attempts to articulate their new understanding, they were bound to offend. One can already detect signs of a clash of ideologies.

Furthermore, in both cases (and with Dichaba as well), these leaders faced struggle in the establishment of their new church bodies. Brandishing his “staff of Moses”, Madimabe introduced a new form of worship into the village of Sefophe, and created an uproar. Whether or not he physically assaulted a man with his staff is immaterial. He clearly was engaged in spiritual exorcisms and this challenged the established church and tribal elders. Monnakgosi also faced serious opposition when he tried to register his church with the Botswana government. His considerable influence among Christian youth in the country as well as his revivalist fervor raised fear and anger within the existing mission churches. In both cases, the introduction of a powerful new message, backed with spiritual signs and wonders, threatened the recognized authorities. Here again is where we witness a fundamental clash of ideologies and the reality of Foucault’s claim that “there are no relations of power without resistances” (1980:142).

At the same time, the eventual acceptance of both men and their churches was interpreted as the hand of God on these movements. Laying claim to the non-agentive power of the Spirit, these leaders made use of “the miraculous” as a tactic in their efforts to deal with the established power structures of their day (see 1.4.3). As Foucault has noted, we understand power best in its relationship to the established authority. Within both of these movements we find that their leaders produced “truth as power”. They supplied a new vision of the world and a conviction that God was at work among them. There was bound to be resistance and conflict. One fascinating aspect of these stories is that even with their obvious similarities these two groups often find themselves in direct opposition with one another.

2.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the origins and causative factors of the four churches being studied. In the first section of the chapter, I discussed various theories of causation posited for both ASCs and NPCs in considerable detail, taking into account the three perspectives promoted by the social sciences, namely materialist, functionalist and idealist. The materialist concern for globalizing imperialist structures, the functionalist emphasis on analyzing socio-economic and ecclesiastical dynamics taking place in the local context, and the idealist appreciation for the spiritual or mystical impulses in a new religious movement all have varying degrees of validity. Therefore, I proposed that a complete understanding of causative factors must synthesize all three perspectives in order to provide a comprehensive picture.

Having recognized the important role of both the global and local context, the second section of this chapter focused on the relationship between the Batswana people and the external forces that have played a prominent role in the country during the 20th century. From the discussion of pre-Independence Botswana, it was noted that the interaction of Western and Setswana cultures has had major consequences. A key strategy in the missionary attempts to challenge the worldview of the Batswana was to do away with or demonize the ancestral spirits (*badimo*), the guardians of the moral order. As many of the important rites and practices of the Batswana people, including initiation, rainmaking rites and ritual sacrifices, were gradually eliminated from daily life, family life and gender relations were noticeably affected. Traditional structures of authority eroded in influence as the missionaries claimed the spiritual power of the chiefs while the colonial authorities threatened their temporal power.

In an attempt to maintain their authority, the chiefs welcomed the Western innovations introduced by the missionaries, especially literacy. Other significant imports were the ideals of democracy and the value of the individual, along with technological advances such as plows, money and the clock. Viewed as social progress, these foreign concepts actually prepared the Batswana to accept the demand for migrant labor with little resistance. Colonial policies led to a situation where large numbers of men were compelled to serve long periods of time working in South Africa or Zimbabwe

in order to provide for the material needs of their families. Family dynamics, already seriously impacted by the abolition of initiation rites and polygamy, education for girls, and the introduction of modern technologies, were further strained by the absence of husbands and fathers for long periods of time.

In this context of considerable change and stress, it is not surprising to find that even though serious efforts were made to root out the influence of the ancestors, *badimo*, they continued to live on, although in a more hidden role. Much the same could be said of the beliefs surrounding sorcery and witchcraft, *boloi*. With the elimination of most traditional rites, the role of traditional doctors was diminished substantially, but they still served an important purpose for those seeking a way to understand the world around them. Over time, these beliefs and others recalling life prior to the arrival of Westerners were reified as *Setswana*, an identifiable system and ideology, as opposed to that of Western culture, *Sekgoa*. In this process, many Batswana learned to juggle these two ideologies and practice what Scott has referred to as “coded resistance” to the imposition of a foreign system (see 1.4.4).

The advent of Independence introduced a whole new set of dynamics into the equation. In 1966, the new Republic of Botswana was truly in a dire situation, but the fortuitous discovery of diamonds led to a future radically different from what had been predicted. Rapid development of infrastructure and the provision of health and educational services led to a better quality of life for many, although the unequal distribution of wealth still remains a concern. Labour migration from the rural areas largely shifted from surrounding countries to the urban areas of Botswana, especially the capital city of Gaborone. Significant population growth, especially from 1970-1990, led to increasing numbers of young people in the cities seeking both educational and employment opportunities. The rise of female-headed households and unwed mothers, which began prior to Independence accelerated, and women in general sought greater rights and freedoms. Rapid development led to an even greater openness to foreign ideas and technologies and many young people traveled outside of Botswana to further their education. The effect of globalization also influenced church dynamics within the

country. Whereas ASC founders came into contact with new forms of worship and theology while working as migrant labourers, the NPC founders encountered Pentecostal evangelists first within Botswana, and then traveled to numerous other countries in an effort to both increase their knowledge and spread their message.

In light of the external influences faced by the Batswana people both prior to and following Independence, it is highly significant to note when and where the leaders of the churches under study lived and ministered. Clearly, both foreign and local dynamics played a huge role in the emergence and formation of these churches. The third part of this chapter dealt with the conversion and call stories of the various church founders. Each narrative emphasized the role of the Spirit of God through visions, miraculous healings, dreams and prophetic words from the Lord. Ascribing their authority to the non-agentive power of the Spirit, they eventually produced a discourse of power in relation to the ideological forces with which they were engaged: the Setswana world, missionary Christianity and Western values and technologies. These leaders were able to overcome spiritual attack, significant health issues and conflict with established authorities by means of their counter ideologies. All of them have functioned as spiritually-endowed charismatic leaders, providing their congregations with power to overcome their problems.

Yet, even though the leaders of both types of churches were engaged in a similar effort to engage the ideological forces present in their context, the creative spark present in these movements has led to significantly different outcomes. In the analysis of their stories found in part four of the chapter, I highlighted the critical differences in their backgrounds. The fact that the ASC leaders began their ministries prior to Independence, while the NPC leaders did not emerge until the mid-1980's is important. Different educational experiences, greater exposure to ideas from beyond southern Africa and all the dynamics involved in a modern urban context have led to divergent visions of the world around them. These differences will be highlighted in the chapters to follow. For now it is significant to note the ASC focus on healing as compared to the NPC focus on successful living in a modern context. This difference in perspective is

even evident in the use of Setswana versus English vocabulary when describing their experiences of the Spirit. Here is where it becomes critical to recognize that the sociological context impinges on theological beliefs.

Based on this analysis of their stories in light of the Botswana context, one wonders how things would have turned out had the Apostle Monnakgosi been born 20 years earlier, or Archbishop Madimabe 20 years later? What would the HC look like if Madimabe had studied at the University of Swaziland, or come into contact with the teachings of Reinhard Bonnke, instead of connecting with Smart Mthembu of the Head Mountain of God Apostolic Church in Zion? How much different would GM be today if Monnakgosi had stayed in Botswana, engaged in agriculture and not met a variety of charismatic individuals from around the world? Of course these questions cannot be answered but they underscore the significance of the socio-economic context on the formation of the identity of these men and their churches.

The findings of this chapter suggest that with regard to the origins of these ASC and NPC churches, the similarities seem to outweigh the differences. In fact, a plausible argument can be made that almost all differences could be accounted for on the basis of the socio-historical context. The need for both groups to engage in a “conversation” with the existing ideological structures led to a certain amount of overlap, as the terms of the discourse are most often set by the “powers that be”. Nevertheless some divergences in belief and vision are already evident as these leaders, reliant upon the Spirit, began to reject, incorporate and re-interpret various signs and technologies into their new visions of the world. The following chapter explores the way in which these divergences have become more prominent in the promotion of unique identities for each type of church.

CHAPTER THREE

POWER AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

3.1 Introduction

The Vice-Bishop of the Hermon Church is a tall dignified older gentleman by the name of Isaac (Bonno) Tsholofelo. He gives the date of his conversion to Christianity as 2 February 1968. At that time he had been troubled in his spirit and sensed God telling him to dispose of his many powerful protective charms (*dipheko*) and follow Jesus. At first he resisted but then felt God warning him that these objects he had come to depend upon were going to kill him. So that night he took all his charms to a nearby hill and burnt them. When his relatives found out, they were afraid and rebuked him, angrily telling him that he would surely die. But he responded by confidently informing them that God would protect him, and then proceeded to give up alcohol consumption at the same time as joining the church. When he was baptized, he was renamed Isaac, receiving a new spiritual name (*leina la semoya*).¹

In one of his widely disseminated sermons², Apostle D.D. Monnakgosi boldly proclaims the following promise: “we cannot be defeated once we move in the power of the Spirit”. He goes onto challenge his listeners to “seek the power, don’t rest until you have the power; yield yourself until you have the power. Dedicate yourself until the power comes upon you. Give your soul no rest until you’ve received the power”. Finally he drives home his point by repeating the following line three times: “Power comes as you are baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost”. At the conclusion of his sermon, a huge crowd of people responded to his call and came forward for prayer so that they might receive this promised power.

¹ Personal Interview. 14 November 2003.

² GM Sermon, “Lord, I Believe” (21 September 1997). Accessed 15 June 2005.

These two brief illustrations demonstrate the concern for spiritual power evident in both the Hermon Church as well as Goodnews Ministries. In both of these congregations, one finds people who are searching for the necessary power to overcome the challenges they face daily. Calling on the help of the Spirit of God, these churches seek to provide answers in various ways, and in the process, enable their followers to see the world and themselves in a new way. One of the subjects touched on in the introductory chapter was the way NPCs create an *imaginaire* of power in an attempt to help their followers navigate the modern, globalized world (1.4.1). Corten and Marshall-Fratani (2001:3) use the term to speak of how Pentecostalism offers a new and alternative vision, “involving a radical transformation of the self and a new collective identity”. ASCs may not be quite as preoccupied with the language of power or modernity but they too are hoping to help their followers forge a new identity as the name change undergone by vice-Bishop Tsholofelo clearly indicates.

In this chapter I will begin by examining some of the dynamics surrounding identity construction and how these relate to both types of churches. The use of various images, symbols and technologies is paramount in establishing a certain ethos within a particular church in relation to the ideological forces present in the Botswana context. This harkens back to the theoretical discussion of power provided in Chapter One (see 1.4). The use of agentic power manifests itself as an attempt to shape and control the world one lives in, and establish an identity. Therefore in the second section of the chapter, I will discuss some of the symbols and technologies appropriated and adapted by these churches in an effort to describe the particular identity created by both of these churches in relation to the Spirit. What emerges from that effort is a picture of two very unique and compelling images of life in the Spirit. This leads into the third and final section of the chapter, an examination of how both these churches envision not only the Spirit of God, but also the other two members of the Trinity, the Father and the Son. The production of a unique vision of God is critical for their particular ideologies. As will become clear in the conclusion, the primary focus of this chapter is to compare and contrast the HC and GM attempts to create a new understanding of their place in the world by means of the powerful Spirit of God.

3.1 The Dynamics Of Identity Construction

3.1.1 Identity Construction: A Definition

In the discussion of power dynamics included in Chapter One, it was argued that oppressed or marginalized groups often develop counter-ideologies as a way to demonstrate resistance to dominating power structures. The Comaroffs (1991:24) explicitly link the construction of an ideology with that of forming a particular worldview, an organizing schema that embodies the beliefs, values, styles, symbols, and political views of a particular group. The connection between worldviews and identity construction is made explicit by David Chidester (1989:20-21) who argues that all “religious worldviews are complex, strategic negotiations in which symbolic forms are formulated, appropriated, manipulated, and mobilized to carve out a human identity and a place for that human to stand and to act as a human being”. With regard to ASCs, Chidester suggests they help their members “negotiate a human identity through contact with superhuman powers in a dehumanizing environment” (:20). The critical nature of identity construction for NPCs is just as obvious, as demonstrated by their emphasis on being “born again” and establishing a new sense of self by “making a clean break with the past”.³

By identity construction, I am referring to the process of creating and formulating personal and social self-identities. George Schöpflin (2001:1) of the University of London argues that “[i]dentities are anchored around a set of moral propositions that regulate values and behaviour, so that identity construction necessarily involves ideas of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, desirable/undesirable, unpolluted/polluted, etc.” Even “natural” categories such as race, gender and age imply moral judgments. Every collective regulates itself according to a hierarchy of norms, and these values and ideas (boundary markers) form the basis for acceptance into, or exclusion from, the group. Furthermore, boundary markers do not exist in a vacuum, but are continually in a

³ Kalu (2003b:92) puts it well: “The core of the new experience is that it re-defines personality and reinvents identity as the born again person develops a new vision, life goals and ethics which constitute a rupture from a sinful past”.

process of being defined and redefined by the group, in reference to the cultural forces surrounding them (Schöpflin 2001:6; Kiernan 1990:211).⁴

To understand worldview formation and identity construction fully, one must analyze more than just the “beliefs” of a group because “a worldview is not simply a way of seeing, or a way of thinking, but it is a multidimensional network of strategies for negotiating person and place in a world of discourse, practice and association” (Chidester 1989:16). De Certeau would of course insert the word “tactics” in place of “strategies”, but the idea is still the same. Furthermore, the importance of understanding the cultural context and interactions with other collective identities is also critical. Joanna Rummens (2003:18) argues that “particular attention is given to the social construction of difference through language, symbolic identity markers, and opposition”. Therefore, to study an ideology or worldview fully, it is necessary to examine discourses, symbols, practices and associations, for all help to establish personal and group identity.

3.2.2 Identity Construction and Symbol

The importance of symbol has already been noted in the earlier discussion of power but a few more comments are necessary here. In his discussion, Chidester (1989:21-22) also highlights the importance of symbols in the formation of worldviews and human identity. “Symbols operating within worldviews are not merely patterns of meaning to be interpreted. They are vehicles of power to be appropriated, owned and operated”. It is this process which creates the potential for conflict between groups as they attempt to assert control over contested symbols. In this battlefield of symbols, groups may produce, interpret, control or re-appropriate symbols in an effort to empower themselves, but they may also reject certain symbols in their desire to re-make themselves in another image. As will be demonstrated, both ASCs and NPCs are

⁴ Hiebert (2008:253) focuses on the continual process of maintaining both personal and communal identity in the midst of multiple relationships and encounters. “As persons, they are forced to negotiate among these different cultures, prioritize them, and deal with the contradictions inherent between them”. This is where NPCs and ASCs offer their members a sense of security in a complex situation.

constantly involved in this process of identity construction in their interactions with both Western and Setswana cultures.

Furthermore, their effort to create a way of understanding themselves and the world around them is more than just a synthesis of the two ideologies/worldviews, but the production of something new. The Comaroffs (1992:xxii) are again helpful with their observation that numerous creative African figures have recast the familiar signs and symbols of Western power (e.g., books, money, mirrors) into something new and relevant for their context. The result is that over time, the symbol or sign becomes part of the group identity, providing a “bridge” between worlds, but still seeking to maintain an identity distinct from them. The recognition that local cultures often appropriate foreign signs and symbols and reinterpret them for their own purposes is highly significant. Both HC and GM profess “the Spirit” as their source of power, but what does the Spirit really mean to these movements? Both appeal to the Bible as the authority for their beliefs and actions but come up with differing points of view on certain issues. These movements have arisen at different times and have been influenced by a variety of foreign ideas; therefore, it seems highly possible that their understanding of the Spirit, the Bible and other forms of power may be highly nuanced, as well as subject to continual modification. One should be aware of the assumption that just because they use similar words, they mean the same thing, especially when they are speaking two different languages! In the sections to follow I will analyze and compare their efforts in identity construction in relation to their claims to have laid hold of Spirit power.

3.3 Establishing An Identity Of The Spirit

3.3.1 The Hermon Church Identity

3.3.1.1 A Community For Batswana

The image projected by the Hermon Church at their headquarters in the village of Sefophe is that of a place where someone who wanted to retain connections to a

traditional Setswana way of life could feel at home.⁵ The original church is a small rectangular building (approximately 5 by 7 meters) constructed of mud bricks with a roof of straw thatching supported by rough poles. The floor has a thin layer of concrete but the rest of the architecture is built of the same materials used before the arrival of Western influences. It is painted brown like most traditional structures in Sefophe and it has white crosses painted on either side of the one door that leads into the church. It should be noted, however, that a newer, more modern structure has been built right beside the original church. At this point, it is only used for larger denominational gatherings.⁶ For local services, the church prefers the more intimate setting of the older building.

In addition to the building design, the HC sends a message that their church is intended for Batswana through their use of African style instruments. The most noticeable of these are two large half barrel size drums covered in cowhide and a smaller drum that is played while singing and dancing. A cowbell is also rung vigorously while the congregation dances in worship. Tradition plays a part as well, for one quickly discovers that men sit on low benches to the right of the Archbishop, while women sit on the floor to his left. All women wear dresses and only the youngest girls would ever enter the church without their heads covered with a scarf (*tukwi*).⁷ In addition, when praying, people show respect by either kneeling or standing – no one ever prays while sitting. The presence of symbols related to Setswana traditional healing such as black bracelets (*dibaga*) or the colorful beads worn by *sangomas* (traditional doctors) around the ankles, wrists and necks of certain church members also lends a Setswana air to the service.

⁵ This is not a novel insight as indicated by the titles of books by Ogot & Welbourn, *A place to feel at home* (1966), and Daneel, *Quest for belonging* (1987), make quite obvious.

⁶ Other signs of connecting to Western culture are the poster boards stuck up on the inner church walls listing the names of church leaders, choir members as well as a roster of which group is assigned to preach each Sunday.

⁷ Traditionally it is expected that young Batswana women will begin to cover their heads in the presence of a man once they reach puberty.

The final and most obvious way that the HC creates an African ethos is by their exclusive use of local languages. Setswana tends to be the language of choice but on occasion, prophets will switch into Ikalanga when relating a vision.⁸ The importance of Setswana was underscored in the HC responses to the Questionnaire (Appendix 1). Although it was written in both Setswana and English (English text on one side of the page and Setswana on the other), not one individual completed the form in English. This is also related to the primary age group in the church (older), and their low levels of education. The exclusive use of African languages sends a message to people – this church is for Batswana. It was started by Batswana and they are not ashamed of their identity.

3.3.1.2 A Community Of Peace

One cannot help but be struck by the manner in which both HC and RBP cultivate an image of harmonious relationships within an inclusive community. G.C. Oosthuizen (1996:312-13; 1997:9-10) has suggested that the experience of the African ideal of *ubuntu* (*botho* in Setswana), the promotion of healthy relationships through mutual care, is the distinguishing feature of South African ASCs. His observation surely extends into Botswana. The priority of *botho* as a communal value was underscored by the Presidential Task Group charged with developing a long term vision for Botswana (Republic of Botswana 1996:8). They provide a fully developed definition:

[I]t refers to one of the tenets of Setswana culture – the concept of a person who has a well-rounded character, who is well-mannered, courteous and disciplined. *Botho* defines a process for earning respect by first giving it, and to gain empowerment by empowering others. It encourages people to applaud rather than resent those who succeed. It disapproves of anti-social, disgraceful, inhuman and criminal behaviour.

This moral value promotes social harmony (*kagisano*) by treating human life as sacred, recognizing the value of every member of the community (see Amanze 2002:125-132).

⁸ This is the language of the Bakalanga, the large minority tribe living primarily in the northeastern section of Botswana. Archbishop Madimabe originated from this area (see 2.4.1). The concern for speaking African languages is also evident in RBP where a young woman was berated for using English when reading a Scripture passage during a service (14 September 2003).

This emphasis on the promotion of *botho* is quite explicit in the name taken by the Revelation Blessed Peace Church. Perhaps even more evident is the greeting, *Kagiso* (Peace), employed not only by HC but every ASC I have come into contact with in Botswana.⁹ In addition, preachers frequently greet their congregations, or interject the words of Jesus into their sermons, “Peace be with you” (*A kagiso e nne le lona*) (Jn. 20:21a). Finally, both HC and RBP, like many other ASCs in Botswana begin their service by singing the familiar Sesotho hymn, *Rea u boka, Morena* (We praise you, Lord) from *Lifela tsa Sione*.¹⁰ The words of the first stanza are as follows:

<i>We praise you, Lord</i>	<i>Rea u boka, Morena</i>
<i>We continually rejoice in you</i>	<i>Re ntse re thabela uena</i>
<i>While we live well/harmoniously</i>	<i>Re sa phela hamonate</i>
<i>Through your protection, Father.</i>	<i>Ka paballo ea hao, Ntate.</i>

Every Sunday they remind themselves that experiencing healthy relationships is by the grace and care of God the Father.

Furthermore it is helpful to note that the word, *kagiso*, in Setswana shows great affinity with the Hebrew word, *shalom*, often translated as “peace” (e.g., Ps. 85:10). The semantic range of both the Setswana and Hebrew words is actually much broader than the way “peace” is often used in English. More than an absence of conflict, it is the desire to see all relationships (with God, with other humans and with the environment) infused with righteousness, wholeness, justice and joy.¹¹ The Setswana concern for healthy relationships is obvious from the well-known proverb, “a person is a person through/by people” (*motho ke motho ka batho*). Ruptured relationships mean reduced life for “the more one ties things together, the more power and transcendence, for power

⁹ The ASCs that I am familiar with in South Africa and Lesotho use the same greeting except that it is in their languages. For example, *Khotsol!*, in Sesotho and Sepedi.

¹⁰ *Lifela tsa Sione*, Hymn # 12.

¹¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff (1983:70) expresses the expansive nature of *shalom* as follows: “*Shalom* in the first place incorporates right, harmonious relationships to *God* and delight in his service....Secondly, *shalom* incorporates right, harmonious relationships to other *human beings* and delight in human community. *Shalom* is absent when a society is a collection of individuals all out to make their own way in the world....Thirdly, *shalom* incorporates right, harmonious relationships to *nature* and delight in our physical surroundings”.

flows through relationships” (Zuesse 1991:173). The welcome hospitality offered to visitors reflects their honest desire to live out their commitment to peace.¹² When new people arrive, they are invited to participate in the weekly sharing of thanksgiving for God’s provision in their lives and/or prayer concerns (*go itlhambolola*) that takes place at the beginning of almost every service. Personal anxieties are freely expressed and church members show their care immediately in prayer.

Many people have come to the HC after having looked for help from either Western or traditional medicine.¹³ What they find are people who are willing to take the time to listen to their problems, take their worldview and beliefs seriously and care for a person as an individual. To kneel in the center of a circle as the congregation dances around them, praying and crying and prophesying encourages people in need – they feel that they are loved. At times the HC will gather for the entire night to intercede on behalf of someone suffering from illness. Prayers are offered, songs sung and sermons preached as the congregation seeks to provide love and support.¹⁴ Even those who practice traditional medicine or are suspected of witchcraft are treated with respect and pointed to the Spirit who can set them free.

In addition, it is not uncommon to find people who are mentally ill and/or spiritually troubled in HC services. These people are not rebuked or escorted out but allowed to walk around, shout and otherwise disturb services. Reverend Paul Makhubu (1988:77), a South African ASC leader, makes it clear:

Healing, the Independent churches believe, was a major purpose of Christ’s mission on earth. Time and again we find Him healing the sick and opening the eyes of the blind. We find Him, not in the palaces of the rulers, dining or attending their banquets. He was among the poor, the sick, the outcasts of the time, preaching and healing. The churches of the people are found among the people.

¹² HC members will also point to Hebrews 13:2 for biblical warrant: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (NIV).

¹³ The Questionnaire results (#2) indicate that 28% of the respondents were attracted to HC because they sought some form of healing.

¹⁴ The title of Lagerwerf’s (1984) study of ASCs in Botswana, “*They pray for you...*”, highlights this emphasis on prayer.

Those in need of healing are not turned away but rather are cared for in churches or the homes of HC members.

Most of the HC members who congregate each Sunday come desiring an experience with the Spirit because they are well aware of their difficult life circumstances. It is quite evident to anyone visiting the congregations in either Sefophe or Gaborone that these are people caught in the lower economic strata of society. There are no cars bringing them to church, no fashionable clothes and they are not meeting in the up-scale areas of a city or town. This is particularly evident in the Old Naledi¹⁵ branch, where a small group (average 10-15 adults, with a few small children) gathers in a crumbling down shelter. Meeting in the backyard of one of the church members, the humble structure is located right next to a pit latrine that often smells strongly. The rectangular shelter itself is approximately four by five meters, with a roof consisting of torn tarpaulin, plastic and shade-netting all tied together to provide some relief from the burning sun. If it rains, the congregation has to put up with damp clothes. The walls are a mix of discarded cement bricks and other odds and ends. Inside the structure, there is of course, no electricity, and the few old wooden benches could easily tip over onto the chipped and broken concrete floor. The candle to signify the presence of the Spirit is placed on an old paint container.

I have described this worship setting in detail not to humiliate the people of this congregation but to point out their difficult circumstances. Almost all church services begin with prayer, but there is an especially strong intensity or urgency reflected in the prayers at HC. It seems they really know they are dependent on God for life and sustenance. The information supplied at the end of the Questionnaire (Appendix 1) revealed that none of the respondents had completed secondary school and a number had never attended school. Many were unemployed and the rest worked at low paying

¹⁵ Old Naledi is the most economically impoverished area of the city of Gaborone. Located in the southeastern section of the city, it was originally an informal settlement that began shortly after Gaborone was declared the capital of the Republic of Botswana in 1966. Many people who had found low paying jobs settled there out of desperation. While the government has done much to improve conditions over the years, it is still the poorest section of the city.

manual labour or were involved in subsistence farming. When they gather together, they are searching for power to make sense of their lives and they believe they have found it in the Spirit. Their concern for peace and wholeness in relationships is abundantly evident in their corporate prayers. In every service prayers are offered up for school children writing exams, those in hospitals and prisons, those who are grieving, and those orphaned by AIDS or other causes. It is not surprising that the hymn “*Morena, boloka setšhaba sa gaetsho*” (Lord, save our tribe/nation)¹⁶ with its call to end conflicts and difficulties¹⁷ is sung frequently in the church. There is a clear sense at the HC that care and concern for the well-being of all people is highly evident, and this is possible through the presence and power of the Spirit.¹⁸ The repetitive use of this well known “resistance hymn” in a worship context also should not be overlooked in terms of its ability to encourage the formation of an ideology to counter the oppressive experience of foreign influences.

3.3.1.3 Visibly United

The welcoming atmosphere of the HC does not diminish the fact that an element of exclusivity remains. The HC sees itself as a distinguishable group and clearly the most visible symbol of that fact is their church uniform. While the idea of a church uniform originated in the mission churches, and was adopted by many other ASCs,

¹⁶ This is the Setswana translation of the famous South African hymn, *Nkosi Sekel' iAfrika*. First written in 1897 by Enoch Sontonga, a Methodist school teacher, the hymn became a resistance anthem against the oppressive Apartheid policies of South Africa. The hymn was fused with the existing Afrikaans anthem, *Die Stem*, in the construction of the new national anthem for South Africa following the introduction of a truly democratic government in 1994 (Olivier 2008).

¹⁷ In Setswana, the second line of the hymn is: *O fedise dintwa le matshenyego* ([God], bring an end to wars and troubles). It should be noted that at the outset of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Hermon Church spent an extended period of time (30 March 2003) praying that the hostilities would come to a quick conclusion and that innocent victims would not suffer harm.

¹⁸ Cephas Omenyo (2000) has noted this same feature in Ghanaian ASCs. He suggests that “AICs attribute their *koinonia* not to efforts merely to replicate patterns of African traditional communal living, but rather to the active presence and movement of the Holy Spirit among them”. They believe it is the Holy Spirit who “liberates them from all forms of bondage and knits them together in unbroken fellowship” (:239). While I agree with his emphasis on the importance of the Spirit, I do not believe the importance of “patterns of African traditional communal living” should be neglected. In ASCs, the two are often held very closely together.

Archbishop Madimabe emphatically asserts that the HC colors came to him while he was in the Spirit.¹⁹ As he put it, the colors were given “by the glory of God” (*ka kgalalelo ya Modimo*) when he was in a trance-like state. The higher ranking older ladies are to wear a yellow cape over a white gown with a white head covering, while the lower ranking ladies wear a blue cape over their white gown. Most men wear a white “lab” coat, while some of the male leaders wear a full length blue gown. The pastors and the Archbishop wear a yellow stole with the words, *The Hermon Church*, embroidered on it. Madimabe also wears a variety of gowns (blue, red) along with a bishop’s miter. Those who sing in the choir have an additional all-white uniform.

The colors of the uniform have the following significance: yellow is a “gift from above” for it is the color of new flowers, announcing that rain has arrived. According to the Archbishop, their church should bring showers of blessing on the country. The color white displays the glory and purity of God, while blue looks to the sky and the connection to heaven, and red points to the crucifixion of Jesus.²⁰ The church colors are also prominently displayed on the flag proudly situated near the middle of the church compound. The HC uniforms tell a story and serve as a sign of membership, a visible means of identifying those who have chosen to join the church. In addition, the Archbishop strongly emphasizes that putting on the uniform means becoming part of a family. To accept the uniform is to become “a child of the church” and even a “child of Madimabe”.²¹ If one decides to leave the church, then they should leave their uniform behind.

Receiving a church uniform and baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit also require that church members exercise specific behaviours – they are

¹⁹ The same claim is made of Archbishop Kapaletswe of RBP (Personal Interview, 2 November 2003).

²⁰ Information regarding HC uniforms was provided in a personal interview with J.M. Madimabe (7 July 2007). For a much fuller discussion of color symbolism in a South African Zionist context, see Kiernan (1991:26-39). While Kiernan makes much of the colors white and blue-green in his analysis, the color yellow is not mentioned at all. This seems to be a HC innovation as I have rarely seen yellow as a major color in ASC church uniforms.

²¹ HC, Sefophe (17 April 2003).

to obey “the law” (*molao*) of the church/God. Prior to baptism, Leviticus 11:1-25 is read and the candidate is reminded not to eat pork or other “unclean foods” (referring to drinking alcohol).²² A similar pattern is followed when members receive their church uniform. They are challenged to live a life of purity and holiness. On one occasion, a preacher loudly proclaimed that church members must know that uniforms do not make one holy. “AIDS has filled the land because Christians have not followed God’s law” was his claim.²³ At another service the Archbishop admonished the congregation not to follow the example of a man who took his beautiful church uniform and rolled in the mud with it.²⁴ The clear implication is that behaviour contradicting church regulations makes one impure and unfit to identify oneself as a member of the church.

One should note, however, that the emphasis on moral rectitude leaves room for discussion and calls for grace. While most members (72%) indicated that drinking alcohol (even traditional beer) was wrong (Appendix 1, #54), I have on two occasions attended HC events where traditional beer was served.²⁵ Again, while over 90% believe sex outside of marriage is always wrong (#55), most of the young women in the church are unmarried mothers. The issue of the Archbishop’s polygamous marriages is yet another example of moral ambiguity. Like many outside of the church, it is not uncommon to hear HC members excuse certain behaviours with the words, “we are just flesh and blood” (*re batho ba nama le madi*). The result is that the HC stands out not so

²² HC, Sefophe (21 September 2003). RBP follows a similar pattern by reading from Leviticus 19:26-30 and focusing on being careful of what one eats, as well to abstain from adultery, cigarettes, alcohol and fighting (30 March 2003). In the HC, women are also taught about additional taboos (*tse di meila*). According to Sentswela Madimabe (Personal Interview, 23 September 2003), they are not to engage in sexual intercourse during menstruation, nor should they touch a man. They are allowed to attend church but should not preach, teach or shake hands with others.

²³ HC, Gaborone (4 October 2003). Although when RBP provides new uniforms, they claim that “when we put on these blessed garments, there is no way the devil can trick us into doing wrong” (25 June 2005).

²⁴ HC, Sefophe (1 November 2003).

²⁵ Following the unveiling of a tombstone of a deceased church member and at the conclusion of the annual church festival where a cow was slaughtered and sacrificed.

much for its strong moral behaviourss but for its willingness to embrace those who fall short of the standard.²⁶

3.3.1.4 Spiritually Connected

The HC deliberately cultivates an expectation that people will meet with God when they enter their church structures. The first thing one does is to remove their footwear on the way into the church for it is a holy place. The biblical precedent is the story of Moses and the burning bush found in Exodus 3:1-6. There Moses was commanded to remove his sandals because the ground on which he was standing was holy. This too is the mindset of HC members as they meet – God is present.²⁷ The use of a white candle at the front of the church symbolizes the presence of the Spirit, often referred to as the “shining” or “glorious” Spirit (*Moya o o Galalelang*). Candles are often used for healing rituals as well as special church functions to remind church members of the presence of God.

In the previous section, the significance of church uniforms as an identity marker was discussed. There is, however, another function of certain unique garments. These robes (*diaparo*) of different colors may also have certain symbols (stars, moon, sun, crosses, handprints) sewn onto them. One male church member wears a robe consisting of leopard print material. These designs have been revealed to people in visions by the Spirit (*di bontshitswe ke Moya*) so that their personal angels will watch over them (*gore lengeloi la gagwe le tlaa bereka sentle*).²⁸ One final potent symbol of

²⁶ Another good example of this moral ambiguity took place during a visit to the church headquarters (7 July 2007). Everyone went into the church for a time of greeting and singing. It was fairly obvious that one of the men was slightly intoxicated. Instead of disallowing him entry, he was given a mild reprimand and reminded of the need to set an example for those younger. He then participated fully in the rest of the service.

²⁷ The size of the congregation does not matter as members will often remind each other of the promise of Jesus in Matt. 18:20: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I with them” (NIV).

²⁸ Personal Interviews with M. Moasi (13 June 2005) and S. Molefe (17 June 2005). Archbishop Kapaletswe (Personal Interview, 2 November 2003) declared that church uniforms have power – “if you don’t wear it, you won’t have power”.

spiritual power is that of staffs (*dithobane*) for senior members of the congregation. Once again the biblical precedent is derived from the Exodus where the staffs of Moses and Aaron were transformed into snakes (Ex. 4:2-4; 7:8-12), used to unleash a number of plagues on the Egyptians (e.g., Ex. 7:14-24) and, most importantly, employed to part the Red Sea (Ex. 14:13-28). By appropriating the symbolic and spiritual power of the Bible, the HC makes an explicit claim upon the presence and power of God.

HC services begin by singing a hymn but then quickly the focus turns to prayer. First there is the extended time of sharing, and then one of the leaders prays on behalf of the whole congregation. It is worth reproducing the entire text of one of these prayers in order to illustrate their profound sense of utter dependence upon God.

We thank you, Lord, for bringing us together here to worship you. Please give us strength to defeat the enemy, Satan, who tries to lead us into temptation in order to prevent us from obeying your commands. *Father, please show us your mercy.* Your people are perishing on account of this plague, AIDS. Lord, we desire to go to you; *we are begging for help.* Vehicle accidents are claiming the lives of many, our God. Some are crippled and [some] are mentally ill. The hospitals are full of those who are sick all over the country. All of this is on account of our sin, Jehovah. Shine your light on us, Father, so that we may do your will. *We humble ourselves* before your glory and beg your forgiveness. Jehovah, please watch over us and protect us, and give us what we need. *Please give us faith that depends on the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen (all emphasis mine).*²⁹

The repeated references to death, sickness, and sin along with the humble requests for God's mercy and intervention are striking. As one of the members once said in a service, "prayer is the most important thing" (*thapelo ke yone e e gaisang tsothe*).³⁰

But this is not the conclusion to their prayers; it is only the beginning for immediately following a hymn, everyone kneels on the floor and begins to pray out loud at once. The volume in the church rises rapidly as people call out to God. Members express their needs, their praise, their confessions of sin and whatever else is on their hearts. This outpouring to God by everyone present sounds confusing, and yet it expresses a deep faith that God will listen to his people. As people slowly quiet down,

²⁹ HC, Gaborone (12 October 2003). My translation.

³⁰ HC, Gaborone (10 August 2003).

someone will begin to recite the Lord's Prayer.³¹ The mix of many voices now unites as each person prays for the kingdom of God to come and his will be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven. In this solemn moment, the congregation senses that they are not forgotten, but God is present and working among them.

When the HC gathers, they want to experience the presence of the Spirit. Being "controlled or possessed by the Spirit" (*ba tshwerwe ke Moya*) is not unusual as 44% of the respondents indicated that this had happened to them at least once (#21), with a number suggesting it was a regular occurrence. Some of those having these experiences speak of sensing the presence of the Spirit as a cool breeze (*phefo e e tsididi*) or hearing the voice of the God (*Ientswe la Modimo*).³² More will be said about this experience later (5.4.2), but suffice it for now to note that the sight of church members jerking in unusual ways, falling to the ground, staggering, crying, laughing, whistling, sighing loudly, burping or speaking in "tongues" (unknown "spiritual" languages) has a powerful effect on all who are present. Furthermore these spiritual encounters may also indicate that God has a message for an individual or for the entire congregation.³³ The HC believes that God is drawing near to them, and that when the Spirit does so, they will feel it in every area of their lives. There is a hope and expectation that God will meet their needs and bring spiritual renewal. They want to experience the power of the Spirit but they know that they do not control the Holy Spirit; rather the Spirit controls, directs and changes them (see Oshun 1992:191).

³¹ Again, this is also the custom at RBP as well as many other ASCs.

³² Personal Interviews with S. Madimabe (23 September 2003) and M. Moasi (13 June 2005). These descriptions are filled with importance in both biblical and Setswana traditions. Wind (*phefo*) is used as a synonym for the Spirit in Jn. 3:8 and the reference to "coolness" evokes images of wholeness in relationships and healing in the Setswana context (see J & J Comaroff 1992:165-166; also Zuesse 1991:177-178). The "voice of God" (*Ientswe la Modimo*) immediately recalls the prophetic tradition in Scripture (e.g., Is. 30:21) while also drawing attention to the experience of traditional doctors (*dingaka*) receiving direction from ancestral spirits (*badimo*) (Ntloedibe 2001:502-503).

³³ See Pauw 1960:197-202 and Anderson 2000c:250-251 for examples from other ASCs.

3.3.1.5 Hopeful In Struggle

As the previous sections have illustrated, the lives of HC members are often full of pain – they struggle with many difficult issues. But it seems many have found something that has changed their lives and given them hope for the future. They would explain that the reason for this new-found joy is the healing presence of the Spirit. On the Questionnaire (Appendix 1), 28% of the respondents said they were drawn to the church because they were ill and were looking for healing (#2), and 88% of them claim to have experienced healing at some point (#26). Almost 100% of the respondents said attending the HC has made a difference in their lives (#3), with many stating that their life has improved (28%), or that they have learned how to pray and worship (32%). The reality of witchcraft and other malevolent spirits is taken very seriously as nearly half (48%) of the respondents claim to have been afflicted at some point by these forces of evil (#34). But nearly everyone (96%) believes that Christians can be protected by God (#35) if they pray and have faith in Him (#36). Because they no longer have to fear witchcraft, sorcery and other spiritual powers, they can experience freedom and victory. As seen in the previous section, prayer is the key.

In light of the difficult circumstances so many of the HC members face daily including unemployment, low levels of education, single parenthood and the threat of diseases like AIDS, it is almost surprising that everyone of the respondents believes that God has a plan for their lives (#67) and that things will improve in the future (#68). The reason for this hope is quite simple: they trust in God and pray (#69). There is a hopeful optimism that God is present and active, even in troubling times. One often hears the expression, “God is here” (*Modimo o teng*), when someone encounters trouble. Some of their favorite choruses express this perspective best:

When God is here,
There is no problem (Repeat)
There is, there is, no problem.

*A Modimo o le teng,
Ga a yo mathata
Ga a yo, ga a yo, ga a yo mathatha.*

and,

He is with me
Jesus is with me
The one who watches over my life
He is with me
Jesus is with me.

*O na le nna
Jesu o na le nna
Mmabaledi wa botshelo ja me
O na le nna
Jesu o na le nna.*

Even in the face of crushing challenges, the HC has engendered a quiet hope that God will supply their needs.

Not only is their hope expressed through prayer but their worship also exhibits a remarkable joy. Many have commented on the expressive nature of ASC worship all over the African continent (e.g., Daneel 1987:244-225; Makhubu 1988:71-76; Oshun 1992:186-196). It is no different in the HC. Their services are characterized by song, dance, enthusiastic hand clapping, rhythmic drumming and vigorous bell-ringing. They have incorporated the appreciation many Batswana have for a celebration into all of their services and rituals. Birth rituals, weddings and other major events are all times for the community to gather and rejoice in dance and song. Therefore, when new people visit HC they do not feel that they have to adopt Western practices in order to worship as a Christian. The HC believes God wants them to enjoy his presence and feel his touch in ways they can understand and appreciate.

Joyous expression in worship can even be witnessed in the manner in which the HC and RBP congregations participate in giving their offerings. Although the amounts given are often quite minimal, they encourage their members to give with a joyful heart (2 Cor. 9:7). They have special choruses that are sung whenever an offering is taken. One of these is:

Everything, everything
Everything, everything
Comes from you
God, we praise you.

*Tsotlhe, Tsotlhe
Tsotlhe, Tsotlhe
Di etswa ke wena
Modimo, re boka wena.*

For each offering, the congregation rises to their feet in song and dances their way around the church as they individually approach the front to offer their gifts. For those who have nothing to give, including visitors, others will step forward and give them money so that they too can give something to the Lord. In this way, all can participate.

The importance of music and song in HC services is most easily recognized by the amount of time spent singing and dancing. Certain songs, like *Rea u boka* (discussed above), act as a call to worship, and draw the congregation together. Specific hymns are sung primarily at weddings, while others are chosen for funerals. Another area where music plays an important role is with the HC choirs. Choirs lead the congregation in worship and play a special role at community events and church festivals.³⁴ But music is most important for its role in helping people connect with the power of the Spirit. Many songs are chosen primarily for the rhythm, and they encourage church members to enter into worship with their whole body as soon they begin clapping their hands, moving their feet and swaying their bodies. This is especially the case during the extended prayer time at the end of services when members join the “circle dance”. More will be said later (5.4.2.1) but we can note here that this vigorous dancing serves an important purpose. As Zipporah Madimabe, daughter of the Archbishop and a leader in the church put it: “We dance (*go chaterese*) because we want the Holy Spirit to come into us (*re batla gore Mowa o o Boitshepo a tsene mo go rona*). In these difficult days, it is especially important to dance, because we need the Spirit in order to live well in the land” (*re tlhoka Mowa go tshela sentle mo lefatsheng*).³⁵ The clear linkage between spiritual power appropriated in a form familiar to the participants could hardly be more obvious.

3.3.1.6 Summary – The Hermon Church Identity

Numerous commentators on ASC life and experience have noted the manner in which they have enabled disempowered Africans to reshape their identity in ways that allow them to exercise some measure of control over their life circumstances (see J Comaroff 1985:197; Kiernan 1990:208-222; Kwark 2004:141-143). In the discussion of the HC identity described above, I have drawn on both the explicit statements of HC

³⁴ This is also very true in RBP. In both churches, the large denominational gatherings held at various times in the year always have a time for choirs to perform at some point in the program of events. For some, this is actually the highlight of the festival.

³⁵ Personal Interview (3 July 2005).

members as well as the implicit messages communicated through their use of various signs and symbols. What has emerged is a picture of a group of people struggling to experience hope in the midst of difficult circumstances and while also looking to the Spirit of God to empower them to experience life in community. Through a conscious effort to remain rooted in their traditional culture, they create and embody an ideology in tension with the prevailing forces of Westernism and modernity.

With the enablement of the Spirit, they have creatively drawn on aspects of Setswana culture such as language, church architecture and worship style to foster a distinctly welcoming atmosphere for Batswana. In addition, their “peace ethos”, most evident in their standard greeting, *kagiso* (peace), and the biblical (Ps. 133) and spiritual background (given by revelation) of their church name, Hermon, highlights their desire to experience harmony both in the church community and with the world around them. Although their church uniforms distinguish them from others, the color yellow as revealed by the Spirit, calls them to be a blessing to the country, to encourage the Setswana value of *botho*. Even their call for a high moral ethic seems to take second place to their commitment to include all who long for healing and restoration. They do not expect life to be easy or prosperous but they believe the Spirit will help them overcome their difficulties. Using material objects such as staffs and water under the direction of the Spirit, and displaying physical manifestations of Spirit-control point to their longing as well as their ability to transcend the vagaries of this world. This too is evident in their emphasis on prayer and their hopeful expectation that God will meet their needs. Finally, their full-orbed approach to life is clearly manifested in their highly expressive forms of worship with its focus on song and dance.

3.3.2 The Goodnews Ministries Identity

Some of the contrasts between the GM and HC are immediately apparent to anyone who has visited the two churches. While there may be remarkable similarities in the stories of their origins, it is clear that the two churches are consciously attempting to construct differing identities in relation to the world around them.

3.3.2.1 Modern, Globally Connected and Prosperous

When visiting GM for the first time, one cannot help but be impressed by the large number of youth and young adults. Although I cannot provide an exact number, it would not be an exaggeration to say that 80% of the congregation is below the age of thirty. There are various reasons for this phenomenon but one of them may well be that GM leadership promotes and encourages young people and women to use their spiritual gifts. Women serve as teachers and preachers; they lead services, translate messages, sing and pray. Young people (male and female) are given leadership positions in the church and are challenged to preach and teach wherever they find themselves. Many of the church branches spread throughout the country are led by young men (in their 20's and early 30's). Young women often lead during services and teach as well. The Apostle Monnakgosi and the other more middle-aged GM leaders are obviously not afraid to turn their young followers loose to serve God. As Monnakgosi once prayed, "Hear my cry, I want to preach the gospel with power and anointing, with signs and wonders. You don't need Bible school for this. God has given you the power to preach the gospel – every boy or girl, woman or man".³⁶

But beyond the youthfulness of the congregation, other signs of modernity abound. The new church building (at a cost of nearly 3 million Pula) is an impressive edifice. Built in the shape of a large warehouse, the front of the structure is beautifully designed with face brick and large ornately engraved doors. Neatly finished inside with a tiled floor and carpeted stage, the interior displays numerous signs of modern influence. All of the instruments played by the worship band are of Western origin, including the drum set, keyboard, tambourines and electric guitar. The electronic sound system with its huge speakers is turned up to a high volume so that everyone is sure to hear. Various musicians and the Master of Ceremonies share a number of hand-held microphones, while the Apostle Monnakgosi employs a lapel microphone when he preaches. A group of young women ensure that the area in front of the pulpit is decorated nicely with fresh flowers and other attractive decorations each week.

³⁶ GM, Gaborone (26 January 2003).

Their identity as a church in tune with modernity and the wider world is of course enhanced by the use of English in all services, although it is almost always translated into Setswana. Rarely is a Setswana Bible found among those in attendance as English Bibles are clearly preferred. In addition, one can also note the high level of literacy and the significance given to the written word by the large numbers of church members who busily take notes during each sermon. Church members also dress extremely well³⁷, although certain haircuts and jewelry are prohibited. It is unusual to see a woman wearing a traditional head scarf (*tukwi*) in church, and no one would dare to wear anything associated with traditional Setswana medicine such as wrist, ankle or neck bracelets.

Their orientation towards the global context is further enhanced by their willingness to draw on foreign sources and to connect with Pentecostals and charismatics from other countries. That GM has been influenced by American Pentecostalism is without a doubt. Apostle Monnakgosi and many of his pastors mention books by Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, Jimmy Swaggart, Benny Hinn, Derek Prince and others as important resources for study and sermons. Monnakgosi has even preached in Jimmy Swaggert's church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (as well as in 20 other countries in Africa, Europe, North America and the Middle East). A number of the GM preachers speak with an American accent when they deliver their messages and pray – they are clearly mimicking what they have heard on video or cassette tapes, or what they have watched on television. In addition, many of the GM songs are borrowed from the repertoire of southern U.S. Pentecostal church circles.³⁸ To accuse GM of succumbing to American influence, as Gifford (1990:382; 2001:62-65) has done of many NPCs, seems to state the obvious.

³⁷ This is especially the case with the Apostle Monnakgosi who dresses extremely well and speaks of having 7-10 fine suits (6 October 2003). Dr. Sitima of BLM is no different; in fact, he may dress even more extravagantly. There is a perception that leaders need to maintain an image of prosperity to demonstrate that God is blessing the church.

³⁸ This tendency to sing older music from southern U.S. Pentecostal circles is somewhat more pronounced in GM than in BLM. BLM worship often draws on Hillsong music (www.hillsong.com/) and other more contemporary charismatic worship music.

A final element in this image is that of prosperity as evidenced by the accumulation of modern goods such as cars, computers and other conveniences. It is common for services to include prayers of blessing for students who are traveling to study overseas, or for vehicles and computers newly purchased. While most members of HC make do with very little, it appears that many GM members are doing rather well economically. This is borne out in the Questionnaire (Appendix 1, #70) where many GM members indicated they had reached higher levels of education and were employed in white collar jobs. From my visits in their homes, I observed that many have accumulated goods such as TVs, stereos and fine furniture. While the GM parking lot is not nearly as full as that of BLM, the number of vehicles is still significant.³⁹ GM members are told that “God waits for us to prosper ourselves” through obedience to His Word – give and it will be given back to you.⁴⁰ Through giving they are encouraged to invest in their future, both here on earth and in heaven, and their way of life along with their responses demonstrate almost unanimous agreement with this doctrine.

3.3.2.2 “Born Again” Revivalists

The GM emphasis on a lifestyle of holiness stems from their belief that those who have been “born again” must demonstrate a transformed life.⁴¹ They are adamant about their commitment to live “clean, pure and holy lives,” and almost seem to

³⁹ The message of prosperity is even more strongly pronounced at BLM than at GM. Dr. Sitima unapologetically refers to himself as a “prosperity preacher”.

⁴⁰ GM, Gaborone (19 June 2005). The speaker went on to refer to Luke 6:38, a classic proof text for those preaching a prosperity gospel: “Give and it shall be given unto you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (NIV). Proponents of the “seed faith” doctrine use this and other texts such as Mark 4:24 and Malachi 3:10 to argue that if you give significant amounts of money, you can expect to receive even more. “God wants you to receive a harvest from the financial seeds that you plant” (Copeland 1986:5).

⁴¹ In terms of being “born again”, Rijk van Dijk (2001:216-219) argues that Pentecostalism creates the possibility for a reorientation in terms of time, place and self-identity. Along with Birgit Meyer (1998b), he notes the fundamental importance of the complete rupture with an “inferior” past, and the embrace of a “superior” future (:216,218). For NPCs, the past has power and is dangerous; “the past’ in their view, haunts people and stands in their way of making progress” (Meyer 1998b:328). Van Dijk and Meyer argue that NPCs believe that in order to move forward into a modern future, one must break free from the constraints of African culture and tradition.

challenge people to catch them in sin.⁴² Their “holiness ethic” is what distinguishes GM from some Pentecostal groups, making them somewhat exclusivist, and giving rise to their self-designation as “revivalist”.⁴³ There is a strong expectation that Christians will not just believe the right doctrines but that they will also live holy, righteous and pure lives. When a person is born again, they leave the things of Satan and begin to live for God. Many of the questionnaire respondents highlighted that being born again meant leaving sin and striving for God’s perfection (#11). A common refrain is that there should be “no compromise” with regard to the gospel, the Word of God, the vision of the church or temptations of the world.

Apostle Monnakgosi explained that there are two types of holiness: imputed (an act of grace) and acquired (act of faith). Imputed righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, saves the individual who commits their life to Christ. In addition, one should expect to see acquired holiness become increasingly evident in the lives of true believers. As the Apostle Paul says in Philippians 2:12: “we are to work out our salvation in fear and trembling”.⁴⁴ A number of questionnaire respondents mentioned that one of the differences in their lives since attending GM is that they have changed the way they live (Appendix 1, #4). Some said that they had left previous churches because those churches did not practice or preach true holiness (#9). The life of Jesus is held up as the true measure of holiness, and his life is to be emulated. In addition, the church has numerous regulations regarding dress, conduct and cultural practices. It is not surprising that all Questionnaire respondents believe that drinking alcohol (#54) and sex outside of marriage (#55) are wrong. As one might expect, rarely will one see a pregnant single woman in the church, or one with a small child, as it seems these women know that pre-marital sexual relations removes one from fellowship.

⁴² D. Mokhokhele. Personal Interview (18 February 2002).

⁴³ The GM emphasis on a strict interpretation of holiness is probably the most noticeable difference between themselves and BLM. While BLM members are also expected to live morally upright lives, they are not overly concerned with issues concerning outward appearance like haircuts, jewelry or whether or not women wear pants.

⁴⁴ Personal Interview (7 May 2002) and in sermons (27 January and 31 March 2002).

What stands out, though, are prohibitions against “punk” or Rasta-style haircuts, human hair in women’s braids (one does not know where it came from), all body piercing (including ears because it provides an entrance for evil spirits) and women’s trousers. Christians should not swear oaths, listen to rock music, or drive over the speed limit “because God can only use a clean vessel”.⁴⁵ Monnakgosi warns his followers that for Christians to experience the all-important power of God, “the Word of God must be alive in you and you must live a clean and holy life. You can’t live a two-way life and move in power – the power won’t last”.⁴⁶ Although this goal of perfect holiness appears to be an impossible standard, it seems that many believe this radical call to live “pure, clean and holy” lives is evidence of the truth of the GM message.

3.3.2.3 Confident Of The Spirit’s Power

GM members argue that they can confidently challenge people to live a transformed life because the Spirit of God empowers them to live the way God intended. They boldly approach new people on the street, at work, while riding public transit and in their neighborhoods and share the Goodnews message. They seem to have little or no fear; and the reason for this assurance is that they are born again Christians who have been baptized in the Spirit. The transforming power of the Spirit and the ability to speak in tongues provides them with a new and distinct identity in relation to others in society.⁴⁷

GM teaching stresses the promise of a new kind of power, a power that is accessible to all members – this is the “spiritual power of God [that] has been released

⁴⁵ These proscriptions were issued in the following services: 24 January 2002; 13 March 2002; 1 February 2002; and 12 May 2002.

⁴⁶ GM Cassette, “Lord, I Believe” (21 September 1997). Accessed 15 June 2005.

⁴⁷ GM, Gaborone (12 October 2003). Wessels (1997:368) explains the importance of tongue-speaking in relation to identity construction: “It serves as a ‘bridge-burning’ act. After that there is no turning back. It is also a rite of passage, introducing the person to a new existence, and assuring that she has indeed been initiated into the new state of existence and empowered to act accordingly”. Also, see van Dijk 1992a:77.

upon us and in us”.⁴⁸ The Apostle Monnakgosi boldly proclaims that “we cannot be defeated once we move in the power of the Spirit”.⁴⁹ At the end of a service one young man prayed, “Thank you for the power, Lord God Almighty that is here, that is in this place. O God, you break, Jehovah God, all the powers, O God, of darkness. Father you are our Victor, our Conqueror, you are a man of war, Lord God Almighty”.⁵⁰ The congregation boldly sings: “Spirit, come down and manifest your power”. Illustrations of this deep concern for power could be adduced almost *ad nauseum* as practically every service has numerous references to the power of God.⁵¹

How does one obtain this spiritual power? In one sermon the Apostle Monnakgosi outlined three keys: spiritual rebirth (one must be “born again”), the Word of God (both the Bible and Jesus as the Word) and finally, through faith.⁵² In another widely circulated sermon he expanded the list to include the baptism and filling of the Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues. To make the point, he loudly repeated three times: “Power comes as you are baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost!”⁵³ Evidence that GM members are seeking to access this spiritual power was clear from their near unanimous claim to speak in tongues. Many mentioned that speaking in tongues enabled them to communicate more deeply with God and made their prayers more effective. GM members believe their church enables them to access the power of God so that they can boldly face the challenges that lie before them.

⁴⁸ GM, Gaborone (26 January 2003). Various scholars (Hackett 1998:262; Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:128) have suggested that the NPC desire that all experience the Spirit leads to a “democratization of the Spirit”. While this is possible, the Apostle Monnakgosi would definitely set limits to this process. He states directly that the church is not a democracy. In his own words: “I’ve told the people that I control the church, the church doesn’t control me. I’m to be controlled by God, not the people. The word ‘democracy’ comes from the Latin ‘demo’ meaning people, which is also the root for demons” (Personal Interview, 6 October 2003). All experience the Spirit, but leaders are only accountable to God.

⁴⁹ GM Cassette, “Lord, I Believe” (21 September 1997). Accessed 15 June 2005.

⁵⁰ GM, Gaborone (17 March 2002).

⁵¹ The same phenomenon is at least as evident, if not more so, in BLM. As Dr. Sitima likes to proclaim, “There is unlimited power and it is available” (BLM, 21 April 2002). See Born 2002:54-58 for a full discussion of the BLM promise of power.

⁵² GM, Gaborone (26 January 2003).

⁵³ GM Cassette, “Lord, I Believe” (21 September 1997). Accessed 15 June 2005.

Although few claim to have been troubled by evil spiritual forces, all agree that God can and will provide total protection for Christians as long as they pray and claim the “blood of Jesus”. A more extended quote from one of Monnakgosi’s sermons demonstrated the effects of this power:

When we believe the power of God and act on the power of God, we shall not be defeated by sin. We shall not be defeated by sicknesses and diseases. The devil will not redirect us in any way because there is power inside of us. You see when there is power inside of something, you cannot touch it easy. When you have a hot stove and it has the power of the heat, the power of the fire, you can’t touch that stove anywhere you like. The moment you touch it, no one will tell you to remove your hand. It will be an automatic response. When you touch a wire that has electricity in it, no one will tell you to remove your hand. Praise the name of Jesus, because there is power in there. And that’s what God wants us to see and to manifest.

I want everyone to pray, speak to God, yield to God, let the fullness of the power come upon you. Don’t rest until you have it. When that happens, you will change. If you’re not a Christian, you will become a child of God. If you are sick, you will get healed and remain healed forever. If you were confused, you will be sound in your mind.⁵⁴

The effects of the power impact every area of life, and in effect make the Christian dangerous to the devil as well as to anyone who might want to harm them – they are like a hot stove or a live electrical wire!⁵⁵ The picture that emerges is a group of people who do not have to live in fear, sickness or confusion but can instead approach life confidently victorious, expecting that God will provide the necessary power and protection. Furthermore, this power is freely accessible to all, young and old, so long as one is willing to place their faith in the powerful name of Jesus.

⁵⁴ GM Cassette, “Lord, I Believe” (21 September 1997). Accessed 15 June 2005.

⁵⁵ Monnakgosi highlights the power Christians have over the devil in another of his taped sermons (GM, 2 January 1992). “God has called us to a perfect calling, you’re anointed that you should break every yoke of the devil. We don’t care what the devil thinks, we don’t care what he feels, we know greater is our Lord inside of us, and we release the power and the anointing of the Spirit of God. Every demon and every devil has no choice but to shudder and tremble! Hallelujah! Thank you Jesus!”

Closely related to their confidence in the power of the Spirit is the manner in which GM and BLM members move towards clearly defined goals.⁵⁶ This purposeful attitude can be viewed in spiritual terms but it also has definite temporal benefits as evidenced by the way NPC members tend to succeed in education, business and marriage. The leadership of GM fully appreciates the importance of a clear vision for the future. The Apostle Monnakgosi emphasizes that young people need a vision that they can own for themselves. In a sermon, he stressed that “the church must be visionary, have a direction, have a purpose. We need to know why we are here, why we are born again – we have a mission!”⁵⁷ An emphasis on vision and purpose naturally lends itself to a future orientation as well. For this reason, it is also common to hear the refrain, “I (or “we”) are moving forward”.⁵⁸ At GM there is a clear sense that the congregation is moving ahead toward a better future.

As one can easily see, this corporate move in a future orientation has significant impact on individuals. In the sermon just referred to above, GM members were also reminded that God has given them the power of choice as to what they will do and where they will go. Furthermore, they have been empowered physically so they can carry out the gospel, socially so that they might impact the world around them, intellectually in that every child of God is a genius, and financially, for as a person gives so shall they receive. Individuals are encouraged to look to the future in a positive manner expecting that they will succeed. The Questionnaire results verified this positive outlook as all members stated that they believed that their lives would improve in the future. Focusing on Jeremiah 29:11, many state their belief that God has a plan and purpose for their lives. As one of their songs says, “He holds the future in the palm

⁵⁶ A BLM document states: “In life there are very few people if none (sic) who do not desire to make progress. Spiritually people desire to see progress in their souls, in their minds, in their bodies, in their finances and in their relationships (taken from a hand-out given to those attending Home Care Groups [23 April 2002]).

⁵⁷ GM, Gaborone (26 January 2003).

⁵⁸ This new orientation towards the future is powerful. “In the secularized world the mystery of the future predominates, and those come-of-age in the modern world have at their disposal unparalleled creative and transforming power” (Oosthuizen 1988:9).

of His hand". The plan is that each GM member will succeed, not fail. They will experience health, not sickness. They will emerge victorious over Satan, demons, witchcraft, and every other obstacle that may be put in their path.

3.3.2.4 Evangelistic

I have already alluded to this point above but the evangelistic zeal of GM must be highlighted as it is one of the major reasons for their growth. As one of the three pillars of the church vision⁵⁹, it is often referred to in sermons. During the 2002 Easter conference, personal evangelism was the subject of all the sessions. On the Questionnaire (#14), every respondent stated that it is important to evangelize others. Not surprisingly, the chief motivation for evangelism was obedience to the biblical command to be Christ's witnesses (#15). Other reasons listed had to do with saving people from the grip of Satan and helping them experience life instead of the condemnation of hell. Regarding evangelistic methods, the most common approach is person to person sharing of the gospel, although many other methods were listed including preaching at crusades and house to house campaigns (#17). It is also noteworthy that nearly 85% of the respondents claim to have brought friends to a GM service. Finally, technology is viewed as a special blessing because it enables GM members to spread the gospel. As Lekgotla Molokwe of GM put it, "Before we could only communicate face-to-face but now we have so many other ways to share the gospel".⁶⁰

There are two important aspects that stand out about the evangelistic efforts at GM. As already suggested under the previous heading, the first is their call to be bold witnesses. Part of their boldness comes from the training they have received. However, it is also clear that their confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit living within

⁵⁹ Monnakgosi outlines the vision of the church as follows: 1) Restoration – bring people back to God; 2) Great Commission – preach the Good News; and 3) Lifestyle of true holiness. Personal Interview (7 May 2002).

⁶⁰ Personal Interview (6 July 2005). See Hackett (1998:258-277) and Kalu (2003b:97-98) for discussion of the NPC penchant for using media technologies in the dissemination of their message.

them gives them courage to share the gospel. As Brother Gopolang of Francistown put it: “Let us have the power, the boldness to speak the Word with authority. It’s the Holy Spirit speaking through you”.⁶¹ The second aspect of their witness is the desire to show love and compassion. This was stressed particularly during the Easter conference sessions dealing with evangelism. Members were strongly encouraged to follow the example of Jesus in love and service, being a true friend to those who need to hear the Good News. Their compassion must be “born of a conviction that those dying without Christ will face judgment”.⁶² GM members are called to share the gospel boldly wherever and whenever so that people might be born again and saved from condemnation.

GM also recognizes that evangelistic efforts must stem from love for one’s own brothers and sisters in the church, the new family of God. GM members are encouraged to love one another and meet together often, both at church and in their homes, to help build a new corporate identity that is somewhat distinct from natural family ties.⁶³ During church, considerable time is spent talking and praying about issues affecting individual members. If someone is taking a trip or going off to study, time is taken to pray for that person. Those who are sick or grieving are given individual attention. But the church also takes time to rejoice with those who are rejoicing. When couples are engaged, when someone finds work, when a student succeeds at school, when someone builds a house – all of these events are occasions for rejoicing in the congregation. The church body gathers around to pray for people, and in the case of a new car or home, they go to the vehicle or home and pronounce a blessing upon it. All of this leaves a powerful impression on newcomers, who are encouraged not to view themselves as visitors but as those who are “at home”.⁶⁴

⁶¹ GM, Francistown (10 March 2002).

⁶² GM, Gaborone (30 March 2002).

⁶³ The NPC proclivity towards individualism has been noted in a number of African settings. With their focus on breaking ties with the past, and separating themselves from temptation, some NPC members have severed family connections (see Mayrargue 2001:288-89; Hackett 1998:261; and Maxwell 1998:354). For further discussion, see 6.2.3.5.

⁶⁴ GM, Gaborone (6 March 2002).

In addition, this “spiritual family atmosphere” at GM is promoted through the strong attachment to the Apostle Monnakgosi and his wife, Elizabeth. Young people in the church are encouraged to refer to them affectionately as “Daddy and Mommy”.⁶⁵ According to Fidelis Nkomazana of the University of Botswana, Monnakgosi has long been loved and respected by young people throughout Botswana.⁶⁶ Monnakgosi used his own means to travel throughout the country to meet with youth groups (especially Scripture Union) and often personally sacrificed his time and financial resources to help young people in need. Since many young people often had to leave home to attend boarding school or university, it is highly understandable that they would look to an adult figure who was willing to make time for them and protect them from dangerous influences. Nkomazana argues that Monnakgosi’s wide following among the youth made it somewhat inevitable that the church would grow quickly once he struck out on his own.

3.3.2.5 Highly Expressive Worship

A final, defining characteristic of the GM congregation is the enormous amount of emotional and physical energy invested in worship. Praise, which includes song, testimony, prayer, and speaking in tongues, is a major component of each service at GM. Worship begins with considerable time spent in singing and praying as a church body. In addition most services include special numbers sung by groups, individuals and choirs. The same can be said for the prayers. Each service has time for the entire church body to offer up prayer and thanksgiving but many other prayers are offered by individuals throughout the service. It is not uncommon for a service to have 30 or more minutes of singing, followed by 20 minutes of corporate prayer and speaking in tongues,

⁶⁵ Gina Buijs (1995:90-93) in her study of the Pentecostal Church of Bethesda in Durban, notes how the use of these terms of endearment for leaders is a common feature in new religious groups or sects. The potential for a manipulative use of power over church members in this regard is a valid concern.

⁶⁶ Personal Interview with F. Nkomazana (12 April 2002). Leaders within GM such as Elder D. Rasefako (20 June 2005) and Evangelist K. Motlhageng (21 June 2005) confirmed this assessment in personal interviews. In fact, Motlhageng claimed that she was “not a Goodnews member but a Monnakgosi member”.

followed by even more singing. Services normally conclude with another lengthy period of praise and worship as people are called forward for prayer.

During the praise and worship segments of the service, the holistic and participatory nature of GM worship comes to the fore. Attending a worship service at GM is an invitation to use one's body and emotions in the quest to encounter God's power. The dynamic of a crowd of young people dancing, clapping, singing, praying, weeping, laughing, speaking in tongues and eagerly following the words and actions of those leading the service makes it difficult to remain aloof. Short expressions of praise such as "We give you glory, Jesus!", or "We love you, Lord God Almighty" are often interjected between songs or during the sessions of prayer and speaking in tongues. The presence and power of God is made tangible in these services, especially when people speak in tongues, fall down under the power of the Spirit or begin laughing or crying under the Spirit's control. GM members believe they are experiencing or feeling something powerful that cannot simply be explained away. As one of their choruses says: "We need your touch Lord, once again, we need your power, Lord, once again".⁶⁷

One also notes their emotional nature in the manner in which the church cultivates an atmosphere of joy. This clearly emanates from the Apostle Monnakgosi himself. He is a joyful man who almost always has an extremely positive attitude. During worship he sets the tone: "It is normal to be happy in a service".⁶⁸ An atmosphere of joy is promoted by means of loudly singing one of their favorite songs:

I was glad, very glad, when they said unto me,
Let us go into the house of the Lord.
There is singing, there is shouting, there is victory.

⁶⁷ Harvey Cox (1995) has argued that the remarkable growth of Pentecostalism is due to its experience-orientated expression that reaches "into the core of human religiousness, into what might be called 'primal spirituality'" (:81). The power of testimony, the story of God's powerful action in individual lives, is primary. "[T]he kind of magical realism imbuing many Pentecostal testimonies is the same one that pushes people toward dancing and jumping and praising in strange tongues: the experience is so total it shatters the cognitive packaging" (:71).

⁶⁸ GM, Gaborone (3 March 2002).

This emphasis is not surprising considering the positive future orientation of the church. Even if one experiences difficulties in the present, those with faith can have confidence that the future will improve. Therefore one can even be joyful in the face of hardship.

One final feature under this heading is the somewhat unusual way the GM church promotes crying or lamentation.⁶⁹ It is hard not to be struck by the loud groaning, weeping, wailing and even screaming that takes place during certain times of prayer. There is a group of young women who perform the “ministry of lamentations” on behalf of the congregation. People are encouraged to pour out their hearts and repent of their sins. Monnakgosi, referring to the Psalmist’s cry to God (Psalm 56:8) to keep track of his tears (“put thou my tears into thy bottle”; KJV), asks the congregation, “Is your bottle empty?” One must cry out to God for “no tears means no power”.⁷⁰ No matter how one assesses this activity, what is clear is that GM members are encouraged to express their emotions as freely as possible.

3.3.2.6 Summary - The Goodnews Ministries Identity

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, the work of Ruth Marshall-Fratani (1995:289-291) has been pivotal in explicating the importance receiving the Spirit has for NPCs in relation to empowering them to change identity, to choose a new story or narrative. The discussion above of the GM effort to construct a unique identity confirms her argument in many ways. The use of both explicit statements and the implicit messages communicated through their employ of various media and technologies adds up to an image primarily geared to meet the challenges of the new urban context of Botswana as described in Chapter 2.

⁶⁹ As far as I can tell, this characteristic is unique to GM as I never witnessed anything like it in BLM or any other NPCs I visited in Botswana.

⁷⁰ GM, Gaborone (19 June 2005).

What GM offers is a sense of control or power over a person's environment. A believer does not have to fear witchcraft because they have been baptized in the Spirit and speak in tongues. But it is not just a matter of dealing with concerns arising from a specifically Setswana context. They also address contemporary realities and interpret them in a manner that allows GM members to utilize the perceived benefits of modern technologies in a manner consistent with their understanding of Scripture. Pentecostal scholar Jackie David Johns (1999:74-75) argues that Spirit baptism is an 'earth-shattering' event that transforms their fundamental worldview:

God is known through relational encounter which finds its penultimate expression in the experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit. This experience becomes the normative epistemological framework and thus shifts the structures by which the individual interprets the world.

The Pentecost experience becomes the defining moment for individual identity formation, as well as the primary lens through which to understand the world.

Theirs is a church that is outward-looking in its willingness to embrace modern technology, foreign influence and material prosperity. At the same time, it is highly concerned with the inner spiritual lives of church members. The inner transformative dynamics of the new birth experience should produce tangible results in terms of changed behaviour (revival). The power to change as well as to experience the abundant life comes from the baptism and filling of the Holy Spirit. Confident of victory through the Spirit, GM members are full of vision for the future and want to share their experience with all whom they meet. Regularly they gather as the new family of God to grow in their relationships with one another as well as to feel tangibly the overwhelming presence of the Spirit in their lives.

3.4 Image Of God And Church Identity

As one would expect, the identity these churches have created for themselves is derived from their image of God and his work in the world. Therefore it would seem helpful at this point to delineate their theological constructs in order to show how these perspectives impact the way in which they approach the topics covered in the following

chapters: Scripture/revelation, healing/deliverance, and culture/covenants. In order to provide a context, I will begin with a brief outline of the understanding of God found within the reified Setswana worldview.

3.4.1 Setswana View Of God

At the outset it must be made clear that one cannot speak of a traditional Setswana worldview in isolation from its relationship with Western culture. According to Jean Comaroff (1985:125), prior to contact with Europeans the Batswana worldview was “almost entirely implicit in Tswana thought and action”. There was no formally written systematic belief system or tradition until the Batswana began to assert their own identity in opposition to Western culture (*sekgoa*) (J & J Comaroff 1991:246-248). When looking specifically at the issue at hand, the Batswana concept of God, the problem of Western bias becomes immediately apparent. One of the first missionaries to the Batswana, Robert Moffat, had the audacity to claim they had no connection to the divine (in Amanze 2002:36):

Satan has employed his agency with fatal success, in erasing every vestige of religious impression from the minds of the Bechwanas, Hottentots and Bushman, leaving them without a single ray to guide them from the dark and dread futurity, or single link to unite them with the skies.

This quote from Moffat illustrates his inability to understand the Batswana reticence to speak about the great and all-powerful God, *Modimo*, as an earlier traveler (1805) among the Batswana by the name of Lichtenstein can attest. He claimed that *Modimo* was believed to be “the cause of all appearances in nature and the origin of all the good and evil that happens to them without any act of their own” (in Amanze 2002:38). It was for this reason that later missionaries were willing to adopt the Setswana word for God, *Modimo*, as a translation for the biblical God.

Similar ideas are expressed by more recent commentators who have suggested that prior to the arrival of the missionaries, *Modimo* was primarily conceived of as the high God and creator of all, who was largely removed from human affairs and relations (J & J Comaroff 1991:155). At the same time *Modimo* was also intensely present within

creation: “[B]eyond, yet all-pervading the whole cosmos – is MODIMO, the great IT, the source of ‘bomodimo’ (the numinous), Protector and Sustainer of all” (Setiloane 1976:21). Within creation, *Modimo* established a certain moral order that if adhered to would ensure social harmony and positive benefits for all. If the moral order was transgressed people could expect to experience *bolwetse*, dis-ease, which included all manner of physical, social, or economic difficulties (Setiloane 1976:44).⁷¹

3.4.2 Hermon Church Image Of God

The HC officially espouses an orthodox Trinitarian view of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The incarnation of Jesus, as well as the salvific efficacy of his death and resurrection, is also affirmed. The Holy Spirit comforts those who have been bereaved and helps people when they have difficulties (Amanze 1994:132). However, within that broad framework, a number of key points are worthy of note.

3.4.2.1 God The Father

Somewhat in concert with the description of God, *Modimo*, given above (3.4.1) God the Father is viewed as the prime initiator of all things, whether good or bad. The Archbishop made his position very clear when discussing disease (*bolwetse*). Disease comes from God and is healed by God. God uses disease as a discipline to push people in the right direction (*thupa ya Modimo ke bolwetse*, “the small stick of God for discipline is disease”). Even witchcraft (*bolo*) and Satan function under the authority of God, for God uses them to gain people’s attention. Satan himself is merely a tool in God’s hand in order that people will call out for God’s help (*ke sedirisiwa sa Modimo gore batho ba kope thuso ya Modimo*).⁷² Life and death are in God’s hands, and there is nothing that can thwart his will. Biblical justification for this view is supplied from a

⁷¹ For a much fuller discussion of the concept of God among the Batswana, see Setiloane (1976:77-85) and Amanze (2002:36-45).

⁷² J. Madimabe, Personal Interview (22 September 2003).

variety of texts including Job 1-2, Ezekiel 24:15-18, Hosea 6:1-3 with Deuteronomy 32:39 providing the most succinct justification of this doctrine:

See now that I myself am He!
There is no god beside me.
I put to death and I bring to life,
I have wounded and I will heal,
and no one can deliver out of my hand.⁷³

God gives life and takes it away; he heals and uses dis-ease to call people back to himself.

It is not surprising then that the HC hold a somewhat ambiguous view of God. God the Father is Creator of all and he is coming to judge those who refuse to repent. At the same time, he is a God of mercy, who answers the cries of his people. When praying for invalid church members, HC members begged God to “stretch out his arm and heal them. Take notice of them with your eye of mercy” (*Ra re atalola lotsogo la gago o ba fodise. O ba lebe ka leitlho la kutlwelo botlhoko*).⁷⁴ Choruses sung in the HC also reflect this awareness of the full character of God: “God, full of glory, intercede/act on behalf of our children (*Modimo o tletse mosa, rapelela bana ba rona*). The Archbishop’s favorite hymn from *Lifela tsa Sione* (#111) makes much the same point – God is a good shepherd who guides with a staff and leads his children with mercy.

3.4.2.2 Jesus The Son

The primary image of Jesus presented by the HC is one of a kind, merciful Saviour who comforts and heals. Numerous biblical texts are used to bolster this image, among them Matthew 11:28-29, Mark 2:1-12, and I John 4:14-15. In a service in Gaborone, Pastor Star Molefe said simply, “If it wasn’t for Jesus I wouldn’t be here today”.⁷⁵ All HC members believe the name of Jesus to be efficacious for he has saved

⁷³ Texts supplied from sermon notes compiled during January to June 2005 by Selebatso Madimabe (accessed 15 June 2005) (hereafter Selebatso notes).

⁷⁴ HC, Sefophe (9 November 2003).

⁷⁵ HC, Gaborone (1 February 2004).

Christians from their sins and he will help when asked to do so (Appendix 1, #40-41). It is remarkable to note how many of the most frequently sung hymns from *Lifela tsa Sione* focus on Jesus as Saviour, encourager, victor over evil, healer, guide, and the one who answers prayer. The same is true of HC choruses which often focus on the loving presence of Jesus in a believer's life. A popular one proclaims that "the love of Jesus is amazing" (*lorato la ga Jesu le a makatsa*). Another example is one often sung while dancing:

<i>O na le nna, Jesu le nna</i>	He is with me, Jesus and me
<i>Mmabaledi wa matshelo a me</i>	The overseer of my life
<i>O na le nna, Jesu o na le nna.</i>	He is with me, Jesus and me.
<i>Lefa ke ralala</i>	Even though I pass through
<i>mogorogoro wa moriti was lesa,</i>	the valley of the shadow of death,
<i>Ga nkitla ke boifa bosula bope</i>	I will fear no evil
<i>O na le nna, Jesu o na le nna.</i>	He is with me, Jesus is with me.

It is not surprising then that the identities of Jesus and the Spirit are often closely linked for both are identified as the Comforter (*Mogomotsi*) who cares for the bereaved and heals the sick.⁷⁶

3.4.2.3 Spirit Of God

The Spirit is often viewed as the healer of those who are diseased, offering life in the here and now, and aiding the desperately needy. The HC would certainly agree with Allan Anderson (1990:73) who argues that ASCs view the Spirit as the "all-embracing, pervading power of God". In fact, the main descriptor for the Spirit is far more often "shining or glorious" (*o o galalelang*) than "holy" (*o o boitshepo*). This subtle, yet important, change points to an emphasis on the revelatory or prophetic nature of the Spirit as well as the Spirit's power to overwhelm those who seek spiritual experiences. It also demonstrates a willingness to alter the Western image of the Spirit that they received via the missionaries.

⁷⁶ A good example of this tendency took place during a prayers service held in the home of a bereaved family (13 December 2003). The pastor prayed: "Enter into the lives of these, your people, whose home has been darkened, comfort them, send them the Spirit of comfort, namely Jesus Christ" (*Tsenang ka gare go ntlo ya batho ba gago ba ba phirimeletswe o ba gomotse o ba romele mowa wa mogomotsi, ebong Jesu Keresete*).

There is no doubt that HC members want to experience the power of the Spirit as their music makes clear. Numerous choruses call for the Father to give the Spirit liberally to his people. Examples are “Pour out the Spirit, Father” (*Tshela Moya, Ntate*), “We give thanks for the connection with the glorious Spirit” (*Re lebogela kopano ya Moya o o galalelang*), “We cry for the Spirit” (*Re lelela Moya*) and “Pour out your glorious Spirit so that the earth may be saved” (*Tsholela Moya o o galalelang, lefatshe le bolokwe*). Hymn #60 in *Lifela tsa Sione* also highlights this cry for the impact of the Spirit:

Come, glorious Spirit,	<i>Tlo, Moeo o Halalelang,</i>
Spirit of truth, of consuming fire,	<i>Moe'a 'nete, oa cheseho,</i>
Enter cold hearts,	<i>Kena lipelong tse batang,</i>
Burn them with love!	<i>Li tukiso ke lerato!⁷⁷</i>

All of the songs listed above invite the Spirit to work powerfully in the world of HC members but there is a certain amount of ambiguity surrounding this desire for the presence of the Spirit. For instance, the chorus “We cry for the Spirit” (*Re lelela Moya*) is sometimes sung as “We run from the Spirit” (*Re tshabela Moya*). Being “possessed or controlled by the Spirit” (*go tshwerwe ke Moya*) is sought after, but also somewhat feared as one loses control over their actions. Finally, there is the unpleasant experience of “spiritual sickness” (*bolwetse jwa semoya*). This condition, which often manifests itself as mental or physical illness, is believed to serve as a call from God, leading the spiritually aware into a prophetic and/or healing ministry. All of these examples illustrate the HC awareness that they do not control the Spirit, the Spirit controls them. Experiences with the Spirit are always filled with power, but they may not always be immediately welcomed.

3.4.3 Goodnews Ministries Image Of God

The GM concept of God has been questioned by some, as admitted by the Apostle Monnakgosi. They are Trinitarian but their emphasis on the oneness of God has led some to accuse them of monism. As explained by Monnakgosi, God the Father

⁷⁷ This first stanza of the hymn is sung every Sunday in RBP as one element of their opening liturgy.

is the commander (Gen. 1), Jesus the Son is the doer (Jn. 1:1-3) and the Holy Spirit is the power in creation (Gen. 1:1) as well as the power for raising Jesus from the dead (Rom. 1:4). Baptism is in the name of Jesus, and they also preach and pray in the name of Jesus.⁷⁸ The GM image of God is closely connected to the way in which they understand the close connection between spiritual and temporal realities. The spiritual battle raging in the heavenlies between God and Satan impacts life on earth. The devil and his forces have actual power to harm believers but the good news is that God is greater and will deliver his followers if they ask.⁷⁹ For this reason, Apostle Monnakgosi likes to remind his listeners that “God is a good God and the devil is a bad devil”.

3.4.3.1 God The Father

The power of God the Father is illustrated by a number of statements from a GM service.⁸⁰ The congregation was welcomed with a greeting from Isaiah 40:28 and a reminder that “they serve a miracle-working God, a God who never slumbers or sleeps”. When Apostle Monnakgosi began to preach, he encouraged the congregation to tell their neighbors that “God is on our side.” Later the song leader proclaimed: “We are going to rejoice - God is a powerful God and He wants to bless us!” Monnakgosi then concluded his sermon with an inducement to praise God because “He is a good God, a powerful God. He has saved us, healed us of diseases. He has given us breakthroughs; God has given us power and set us free from the enemy”.⁸¹ While

⁷⁸ Personal Interview (7 May 2002). Monnakgosi argues that their practice of baptizing exclusively in the name of Jesus is linked to their desire to revive the example of the early church. They are simply following the examples found in the book of Acts (2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5).

⁷⁹ The prominence of spiritual conflict in NPC life and doctrine is well documented throughout the African continent (see Kalu 1998:9-10,13; 2000b:119-126; Wessels 1997:363-365; and Asamoah Gyadu 2005:142-144).

⁸⁰ GM, Gaborone (22 June 2003).

⁸¹ The following excerpt from a prayer during the 17 March 2002 service reiterates the manner in which GM emphasizes the power of God the Father: “We bless and glorify your holy name for you are a God of all impossibilities. Father, there is no power that is beyond your ability, Jehovah God. Father with you all things are possible. Jehovah God, we thank you, Jehovah, for you are a great God. Thank you for the power, Lord God Almighty, that is here, that is in this place. Father you are our Victor, our Conqueror, you are a Man of war, Lord God Almighty, Father Jehovah, for there is no spirit that shall prevail against your will.”

praying for the sick, Monnakgosi reminded his listeners that “God is not a weak God for he never fails, and he heals permanently.” Immediately following, the congregation was led in the song:

Victory is mine, Victory is mine, Victory today is mine,
God told Satan to get thee behind me.
Victory today is mine.

God is a mighty God, able to conquer every foe but God is also a Father, who loves his children and seeks to bless and empower, not curse them with disease. On another occasion, Monnakgosi stressed that God wants to meet our needs. God desires to save people (Mt. 18:11), to have fellowship with his people (Mt. 18:20), to see his people blessed (Ps. 1:3), and God wants his children to prosper (3 Jn. 2). GM members just need to keep asking God and he will supply whatever is lacking.⁸²

3.4.3.2 Jesus The Son

When turning to the person of Jesus, the music at GM again illustrates the close connection between his power and his immediacy to the believer. In one service the congregation sang:

All power belongs to Jesus, all power belongs to him.
All power belongs to Jesus, all power belongs to him.
He made the lame to walk, he made the blind to see.
He made the deaf to hear, all power belongs to him.⁸³

Shortly thereafter they were led in another chorus with Jesus as subject except in this case his care for the believer was stressed:

Jesus is everywhere, Jesus really cares.
No matter what you're going through, he'll fix it just for you,
For He knows just what to do.
When the preacher is not around, when loved ones can't be found,
Don't depend on anyone else, talk to Jesus for yourself.
And I know he'll answer your prayers.

As the second chorus emphasizes, Jesus answers prayer. Furthermore the Questionnaire respondents emphasized that it is critical to prayer in Jesus' name

⁸² GM, Gaborone (19 June 2005).

⁸³ GM, Gaborone (3 March 2002).

because his name is powerful (#41-42). The blood of Jesus, his death, also has power not only to effect salvation from sin but to also protect against all spiritual attack.⁸⁴

As the faithful Son of God, Jesus is the connection, the link, the only one able to provide access to the Father (Jn. 14:6). Moreover his indwelling (Gal. 2:20) or abiding presence (Jn. 15:1-7) within the “born again” believer provides the key to accessing spiritual power for believers can do all things through Christ who gives them strength Phil. 4:13).⁸⁵ But even as Jesus was dependent upon the power of the Holy Spirit during his earthly life (Acts 10:38), GM also teaches that Jesus gives believers the Holy Spirit to accomplish God’s purposes in their lives.

3.4.3.3 Spirit Of God

Somewhat in contrast to the HC, GM portrays the Holy Spirit much more impersonally as the power and fire of God. This is illustrated well in Monnakgosi’s commentary on Acts 1:8 and the impact of the Spirit of God in a believer’s life.

God has called the church to be a powerful church, a church that moves in power. Jesus says, you shall receive power when the Holy Ghost comes upon you. God promised the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit will come. When we receive Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes into us, when we get “born again”, when we realized we were sinners, and repent from our sins, and promise God that we will live according to His Word, He gives us power and strength. The power of God comes upon us. In Romans 8:9, God says, “The Spirit of God comes into our lives, because he who does not have the Spirit of God is not of Christ.”

⁸⁴ Another excerpt from a prayer offered in a GM service (17 March 2002) illustrates the close link between power, the name of Jesus and the blood of Jesus: “Lord, Jesus Christ, we desire to dedicate your servant unto you Lord God Almighty, in the Mighty name of Jesus Christ . . . we surrender him totally and completely into your hands Oh King of Glory, in the mighty name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Lord God. Daddy, we plead the blood of Jesus upon his life, upon every transport that he shall use, Oh God, in the mighty name of Jesus Lord we stand against all the plans of the enemy in Jesus’ holy and precious name, we say, ‘Devil, the blood of Jesus is against you, the blood is against you, the blood of Jesus is against you in Jesus’ holy and precious name’.”

⁸⁵ GM, Gaborone (26 January 2003). The BLM Believers Class Lessons ([S.a.]:29) drive home this point clearly: “In order to experience God’s power in your life, you must come to the understanding that you can live in conscious dependence upon Christ, recognizing that it is His power, His wisdom, His resources, His strength and His ability – His very life – *operating through you*, which will enable you to live an abundant, victorious life” (italics in original).

We need the fullness of the Spirit of God, releasing power upon us as the church. That's why the Lord Jesus Christ says here, you will receive power, 'dunamis'. I like that word, that Greek word, 'dunamis', because when the dynamite comes into the place, people have to be careful how they walk. That's why even the world has come up with a law that says the making of landmines must be prohibited. Landmines, these bombs that are put under the ground to kill people, they should not be manufactured because those are dynamite. God says we shall be given to be dynamite – power shall come forth after the Holy Ghost has come upon us.⁸⁶

The Spirit of God is explosive, able to totally annihilate any problem a GM member may face. According to GM doctrine, the Holy Spirit is always associated with fire in both Old and New Testaments.⁸⁷

The baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire is a one-time, second work of God which enables GM members to speak with other tongues, and fills them with power so that they can emerge victorious in spiritual battle with the devil. The filling of the Holy Spirit and fire is available continuously, and is experienced as a daily renewal of spiritual power for holy living. The presence of the Spirit is viewed primarily as the Christian's main source of power but there is a somewhat more personal aspect in the sense that the Spirit is a Helper who teaches God's Word (Jn. 14:26) and helps in prayer (Rom. 8:26-27). This personal element, however, is largely overshadowed by the incredible focus on spiritual empowerment. The Spirit is "power that comes from God".

3.4.4 Comparative Analysis

As one would expect among Christian movements, there is considerable overlap between the HC and GM images of the triune God. However some significant differences do emerge when dealing with each member of the Trinity separately. The HC image of God the Father shows significant continuity with the Setswana view that

⁸⁶ GM Cassette, "Lord, I Believe" (21 September 1997). Accessed 15 June 2005.

⁸⁷ GM Services, Gaborone (12 October and 2 November 2003). This emphasis on the connection between the Holy Spirit and fire is somewhat at odds with Setswana notions of health and wholeness where "coolness" is the desired state and those who are dangerous are referred to as "hot" (Zuesse 1991:178-179). The Setswana verb, *go fodisa*, usually translated as "to heal" literally means "to cool" (Matumo 1993:72).

God is the originator of all aspects of life, good or bad. In the HC even Satan is believed to fulfill a purpose designed by God the Father, and disease can be utilized to call those whom God desires to be healers and prophets. In GM, a clear dichotomy between good and evil has been erected, and God the Father is a wholly good and all-powerful deity who desires to bless his children. Satan, the implacable enemy of God, has been overcome; and disease is defeated through faith in God. When dealing with Jesus, one also finds important distinctions. While both churches worship Jesus as Saviour, the one who forgives sin, HC focuses on Jesus' kindness and gentleness when dealing with believers. GM, on the other hand, strongly emphasizes Jesus' power as the "Lion of Judah". The love of Jesus is pronounced in HC testimonies and songs, while GM members call on the powerful name of Jesus, and depend on his blood to protect them from evil. For both churches, the person of Jesus is highly important but their emphases seem to diverge slightly.

Finally, when turning to the Spirit, other differences emerge. Again, while both churches clearly focus on the power of the Spirit, HC tends to relate to the Spirit in a more personal manner as the Comforter and Healer. The GM depiction of the Spirit is almost overwhelming in its focus on the Spirit as the power of God. A primary image is that of fire. Although the exact significance is difficult to ascertain, the principal descriptors used for "Spirit" (*Moya*) in the churches should also be noted. While HC usually describes the Spirit as "shining/glorious" (*o o galalelang*), GM prefers the English usage of "Holy". It is possible that the HC descriptor may focus on the revelatory or prophetic nature of the Spirit; whereas the GM adjective emphasizes the moral.

3.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate how both the HC and GM have developed a distinctive self-identity in relation to the presence and power of the Spirit. Both churches clearly identify themselves as Christians who believe in the triune God, practice baptism and the Lord's Supper and look to the Bible as their guide for life.

Yet, even with these similarities, clear differences in self-perception remain. Arising at different times and in different contexts, both movements have been forced to develop a new ideology and theology, a new way of understanding the world. I have sought to illustrate the way in which these churches employ various media, symbols and “technologies” in their discourse with the prevailing Setswana and Western ideologies. This discussion of “relations of power” (Foucault) in turn reveals how these groups have sought to produce a distinct identity for themselves as well as the God they worship.

The findings of this chapter have illustrated that the Hermon Church is a place where Batswana can feel closely connected to Setswana culture, creating an ethos where harmony in interpersonal relationships is vital. This church emerged in a context of sustained denigration of Setswana culture and beliefs, and they have sought to retain numerous aspects of their former life. They believe that the Spirit empowers them to forge a new Christian identity that encourages them to remain firmly rooted in Setswana culture. At the same time, they strongly identify with the biblical narrative, and look to it for guidance and inspiration. The name of their church and the new names received at baptism are drawn from the Bible, clearly indicating their desire to connect with biblical Christianity. In this way, the Spirit enables them to experience wholeness in all aspects of life, including their relationships with God and others.

Like all people, they want to experience spiritual, physical, emotional and material security, and they believe that their connection to the Spirit will provide what they need. But they do not expect God to ensure them financial prosperity, nor do they believe that Western culture has the answer to their deepest spiritual longings. Rather they humbly depend on God to heal them and meet their needs, finding hope in their daily struggles. In their worship, they pour out their longings for a better future as well as connect spiritually, emotionally and physically with spiritual power. They believe God is the mighty Creator of all things, good and evil, and trust in Jesus for salvation, healing and abundant life. The powerful Spirit of God meets them in worship, and renews their lives through various rituals.

The members of Goodnews Ministries are clearly seeking to find a way forward in a radically different context from that of pre-Independence rural Botswana. Modern forces and values have drastically changed their lives, and they are longing to hear a gospel that makes sense of their experience. GM offers to do that for them by providing them with a new identity as born-again, Spirit-filled, successful individuals. Using the Bible as their guide and inspiration, GM both reinterprets the way Batswana once understood reality while also offering their own understanding of the modern world. In so doing they attempt to deal with the “spiritual” concerns arising from Setswana culture (i.e., witchcraft, ancestors and traditional medicine) while also providing a way through the maze created by Westernization, modernization and urbanization. Western culture is embraced as long as it leads to what they believe is the “abundant life”. The key to this effort is their belief that the Spirit of God enables them to perceive the true nature of both traditional and modern life, and emerge victorious over any obstacle placed before them.

This “revivalist” church presents a clean, holy and righteous image to the world around them. Confident, visionary, young – they are unafraid to promote their message wherever they go. Neither are they afraid to pour out their emotions in their highly energetic worship services. Projecting an aura of love and joy, they welcome other young, urban Batswana to join them as they progress into a bright future. GM members seem unafraid to face the future because they believe God desires to bless them with a successful and prosperous life. As an all powerful and good God, he will empower them to overcome the devil, disease and poverty. Jesus, too, is a mighty Saviour whose name and blood confer power on those who pray and walk in holiness. The Holy Spirit is the dynamic power of God working in GM members, inspiring them to speak in tongues, live righteously and prosper in all of their undertakings.

This brief summary illustrates some of the key differences and similarities between the HC and GM in terms of their self-identity, view of God and their perception of the world around them. Although both churches rely heavily on Scripture and a dependence upon the Spirit in the creation of their ideologies, significant differences are

evident. In many ways, these groups have had little choice but to use the resources presented to them by both Setswana culture and modernity. While the HC has chosen to present a more Setswana face to the world through its “tactics”, GM clearly leans more towards a modern, Western look. But both types of churches are engaged in a complex web of relations of power, having to deal with both local and global realities. Nevertheless, differences in age, economic status, education levels, church architecture and primary language have all led to a distinct identity for each group.

In addition, their beliefs surrounding the person and character of God also provide evidence of some serious divergence of opinion. The production of truth is necessary to assert power, and both groups engage in this process through their theology. Thus, while both groups emphasize the supreme power of God, a certain ambiguity seems to exist in HC members’ minds, as they recognize that God superintends both the good and bad experiences of life. In GM, on the other hand, a clear dichotomy has been erected between the righteous and good kingdom of God, and the evil reign of the devil. God is a mighty warrior who empowers his children to emerge victorious in all circumstances.

This discussion of the self-identities of these churches has not nearly exhausted all the key areas of disagreement between them. In the following chapters I will examine in much greater depth three areas that have only been briefly discussed to this point: the biblical text and prophetic revelation, healing and deliverance, and finally culture and covenants. To begin, I will examine the manner in which both of these groups employ the Bible in their effort to construct a “world” that explains their context, and empowers them to live well.

CHAPTER FOUR

HERMENEUTICS AND THE SPIRIT

4.1 Introduction

The importance of the Bible for both ASCs and NPCs is well-documented in the literature. Ogbu Kalu (1998:4) has argued that “it is the claim of Pentecostal faith and the warrant of the Pentecostal ministry to insist that the Bible provides the materials out of which an alternatively construed world can be properly imagined”. South African ASC leaders (Speaking 1985:23) describe how the Bible gave them freedom to be themselves instead of conforming to a Western cultural mold once they began to read it for themselves: “[A]s we became more acquainted with the Bible, we began to realize that there was nothing at all in the Bible about the European customs and Western traditions that we had been taught”. In both cases, these churches have been faced with powerful external forces that have sought to define their way of life, but they have refused to succumb easily and instead used the Bible as one of their primary weapons in this ideological battle.

For these groups, the Bible has been fundamental for authorizing their way of approaching rapidly changing cultural contexts. They believe that the Spirit has empowered them to understand the Word of God and apply it to both traditional African realities as well as to the globalizing influences all around them. They read the Bible through a “spiritual” lens focused on their life experience. In the previous chapter, the importance of the Bible in determining the nature of each church’s identity was made evident by the numerous references to biblical texts. The use of the Bible in various healing and deliverance practices, as will be described in Chapter Five, further validates the centrality of the Bible for both GM and HC. In this chapter, the focus shifts to look more specifically at how these churches approach and use the Bible in ways that shape their individual ideologies and give life and hope to their communities. Even though the results of their hermeneutical efforts differ, I will argue that both ASCs and NPCs

employ the Bible as their interpretive authority in an effort to create an alternative vision of the world. They are exercising conscious, agentive power in an effort to find a more satisfactory answer to the challenges of modern life.

This chapter begins with a discussion of some of the key issues concerning ASC and NPC hermeneutics as they have been identified by various scholars. Then I will shift focus to the specific churches in order to illustrate how the Bible is employed within specific community contexts. An important feature of this discussion is the role of the Spirit in the preaching event. The importance of the Bible as the Word of God, the relationship between Old and New Testaments and their tendency to dramatically “re-live” the biblical stories will be highlighted in order to better understand their views on the authority of the Bible, and their interpretive “tactics”. A final topic will be a consideration of how the written text relates to prophetic revelation. The authority of Scripture in relation to historical experience, spiritual revelations or visions, prophetic utterances, “words of knowledge”, and dreams forms the backdrop for this discussion.

It is my contention that although both of these churches focus on the illumination of the Spirit as well as lived-out experience in their approach to the Bible, the results differ considerably. The interpretive center for each group is significantly different, and this leads them to unique conclusions in relation to their views of, and willingness to interact with, both traditional Setswana culture as well as the forces of modernity. What becomes evident is that it is not so much their hermeneutical method that determines their interpretation of Scripture, but their predilection to focus on specific themes that validate their ideology and provide hope in their specific context.

4.2 Theoretical Approach To Hermeneutics

4.2.1 Experience-based Hermeneutics

Writing in 1996, Allan Anderson (:171) lamented that very little research had been conducted with regard to ASC hermeneutics. However this is not to say that scholars have not sought to understand how these churches approached the Bible

earlier. Already in 1965, Harold Turner authored a short book entitled *Profile Through Preaching* in which he endeavored to determine whether a large West African ASC, The Church of the Lord (Aladura), was Christian or not. His method of study was to collect and analyze Scripture texts and sermons preached in that particular church over a certain length of time. His study is highly instructive but in his quest to analyze their doctrine, he failed to devote adequate energy to understanding how this specific ASC applied the biblical passages to the lives of church members.

Of those who have commented on the ASC and NPC use of the Bible, many have noted their “fundamentalist” (M West 1975:174-175; Ojo 1996:92), “literalistic or ‘concordistic’” (Anderson 2000b:134),¹ and “pre-critical” (Mijoga 2001:123)² interpretative tactics. Their desire to take Scripture and apply it immediately to real-life experience is certainly very evident. Kalu’s (1998:11) comments regarding NPC hermeneutics are instructive on this point: “Pentecostal hermeneutic is praxis-orientated with experience and scripture being maintained in a dialectical relationship. The Holy Spirit maintains the ongoing relationship”.³ Anderson (1996:174-79) supports this position when he notes the way church members bring the felt needs of everyday life and their experience of the Spirit to their reading of Scripture. These observations could lead to the conclusion that their hermeneutics are somewhat simplistic, and relatively non-reflective. However, while the immediate context and the experience of the Spirit for these churches is clearly critical, their approach to Scripture may actually be far more complex than what is immediately evident.

¹ By “concordistic”, Anderson (2000b:134) means that “they take the Bible as it is and look for common ground in real-life situations. On finding these ‘correspondences’, they believe that God is speaking. The gospel therefore has immediacy and becomes relevant to their life experiences”.

² When Mijoga (2001:123; also Punt 1999:321; GO West 2002b:74) writes about a “pre-critical” reading, he is referring to reading in front of the text, “whereby the reader re-reads the Bible from the context of his/her situation, that is, the Bible is read with the context of the reader in mind”. Reading from behind the text requires one to try and recover the original context of the biblical writers. Mijoga goes on to argue that “although these preachers read the Bible pre-critically, they have their own ways of interpreting the Bible and offering biblical interpretation” (:124).

³ Kalu (1998:11) continues along the same line by quoting S.A. Ellington: “For Pentecostals, doctrine is not essentially generative in function but rather descriptive’, and is used to verbalize lived experience”.

Many claim that the Bible stands as the ultimate source of authority for believers in both ASCs and NPCs. In their discussion of ASC hermeneutics, Nthamburi and Waruta (1997:51) argue that “the Bible has come to take the place of the traditional ancestor whose authority cannot be disputed”. Although this might be the case, one wonders if things are really that simple. The importance of dreams and the prophetic word in ASCs (Anderson 1996:179-181) and “new revelation, piping hot” within NPC circles (Kalu 1998:11) makes one wonder if the written Word is quite as authoritative as some believe. The scholars referred to above are not oblivious to the creative impulses surging through these churches. Ogbu Kalu (1998:11) summarizes his analysis of NPC hermeneutics with this assessment: “The emphases are on the experiential, relational, emotional, oral faith, immediacy of the text and a freedom to interpret and appropriate the multiple meanings of the biblical texts”. His comments about “oral faith” and a “freedom to interpret and appropriate multiple meanings” are highly suggestive and need to be unpacked. Anderson (2000b:134) makes a similar point in relation to ASCs when he suggests that they “enlarge the meaning of the Bible for themselves, out of their own context with its own inherent presuppositions”. Their treatment of the biblical text may have more flexibility than is often presumed, and allow for the use of selective “tactics” in relation to competing truth claims.

4.2.2 Orality-based Communal Hermeneutics

Those who have analyzed the nature of orality have highlighted the importance of community and relationships (Ong 1982:31-76; Brown 2004:26-32).⁴ In a primarily oral community, one cannot learn anything apart from a relationship with others. Anderson (2000c:135) notes the connection between an oral hermeneutic and the practical realities of life:

In keeping with the strong sense of community among African people, members usually read, or rather hear, the Bible in the community of the faithful, during celebrations of communal worship, where it is often directly related to real

⁴ Ong (1982:73) states it as follows: “Because in its physical constitution as sound, the spoken word proceeds from the human interior and manifests human being to one another as conscious interiors, as persons, the spoken word forms human beings into close-knit groups. When a speaker is addressing an audience, the members of the audience normally become a unity, with themselves and with the speaker”.

problems encountered by that community. This oral interpretation of the Bible as it is prayed, sung, danced and preached in the worship of these churches implies a hermeneutics from the underside of society.

The community builds one another up and encourages each other as they speak and sing the biblical message with each other. As Philip Jenkins (2006:26) has written, there is “a sense that the religious community becomes the vehicle for the divine message”. Furthermore, oral communities remain far more open to the leading of the Spirit as “the record of the acts of the Holy Spirit is open....One might even say that the Holy Spirit is the highway by which oral communities have equal access to the Good News” (Larson 1989:50). In these communities, the written record is not the end of the story, and spiritual revelation allows for considerable innovation and adaptation.

These brief comments regarding orality challenge the researcher to recognize the creative impulses inherent in both ASC and NPC hermeneutics. Gerald West (2002a:34-35), building on the work of Vincent Wimbush, has noted the way in which African American slaves appropriated the Bible for themselves, “both by watching how whites used this book and by forging their own interpretive resources so that they could wrest control of this potentially powerful object from them”.⁵ In another article dealing with the need to consider the “interpretive interests” of ordinary readers of the Bible, West (2002b:74) notes how Wimbush has referred to these interpretive impulses as “a looseness, even a playfulness” towards the biblical text. Perhaps the HC and GM are not being deliberately subversive in their readings of the text but they are clearly seeking to create their own view of reality and the world around them vis-à-vis the predominating cultures. Here again, we recognize the use of “tactics” by marginalized groups who are seeking to create their own ideological identity.

In their quest to forge a new way forward that synthesizes and critiques both modernity and traditional African beliefs, NPCs use the Bible differently than many Western trained biblical scholars. Kalu (1998:11), using imagery developed years ago

⁵ The potential to control relations of power through the choice of language is noted by theologian Walter Wink (1973:8): “Even the choice of syntax and vocabulary is a political act that defines and circumscribes the way ‘facts’ are to be experienced—indeed, in a sense even creates the facts that can be studied”.

by Friedrich Schleiermacher, argues that NPC hermeneutics are “feminine” in that they intuitively create new understandings of the text as they interact with their immediate context in opposition to “masculine” readings which focus more on critical and historical interpretation. He goes on to suggest that “Pentecostal hermeneutics is feminine, eschatological, organic and helps the audience to recognize the signs of the times and to discern what God is doing in the today’s world; this becomes empowerment for a ‘counter-world imagination’”. Focusing on lived experience and spiritual insight, NPCs practice “trust” hermeneutics as opposed to the hermeneutics of suspicion championed by liberation theology.

4.2.3 Creative And Spiritual Hermeneutics

While Kalu’s assessment sounds empowering and liberating, the reality is that not all theologies based upon a belief in the authoritative Word of God have worked out that way in Africa (or other continents for that matter). In relation to the oppression of women, Mercy Oduyoye (1995:174) has argued that “throughout Africa, the Bible has been and continues to be absolutized: it is one of the oracles that we consult for instant solutions and responses”. Tinyiko Maluleke (1996b:12) has also weighed in on this subject noting that “it is the naïve equation of the Bible to the Word of God which constitutes the veritable incubus for African Christianity and African theologies”. The dangerous effect is that without much effort demagogic preachers can manipulate their followers by appealing to the authoritative “Word of God”, when it is actually their own self-interested interpretation that they are propagating.

However, Maluleke (1996b:13) also argues that while “the Bible-is-equal-to-the-Word-of-God” formula has clearly been misused, it may not be as destructive as it appears on first glance. Ordinary readers should be given more credit for “they are actually creatively pragmatic and selective in their use of the Bible so that the Bible may enhance rather than frustrate their struggles”. And in another article (1997:15), he suggests that “on the whole, and in actual practice, African Christians are far more innovative and subversive in their appropriation of the Bible than they appear”. The

tension between these two views is immediately evident when considering the views of Itumeleng Mosala and Musa Dube concerning ASC hermeneutics.

In his study of ASC hermeneutics in a South African context, Mosala (1996:55) engages the “Word of God” discussion and asserts that the Bible “is not appropriated for what it says but for what it stands for – a canonical authority”. In addition, he claims that:

working class members of the AICs do not search their contemporary historical experience to find tools with which to unlock the mysteries of the Bible. Rather, they appropriate the mysteries of the Bible and indeed of traditional African society in order to “live through” their problematic as members of a subordinate class.

Mosala refers to this as “*the hermeneutics of mystification*”, and argues that further study is needed to develop this idea.⁶ I would suggest that some of what Mosala refers to as “the hermeneutics of mystification” might legitimately be called ‘the hermeneutics of the Spirit (my term)’ or “reading from a *Semoya* [of the Spirit] perspective” (Dube 1996:123-27).

Musa Dube in Botswana (1996:127) has described this *Semoya* hermeneutic as follows: “Thus a *Semoya* [spiritual] reading relies on the direct agency of the Spirit, which by its revelations and power equips different people to participate creatively in the daily process of restoring and empowering God’s diverse creation to its fulfillment”. She continues along the same line by noting the reconciling and healing emphasis present within a *Semoya* hermeneutic, arguing that this “framework presupposes there is something good for all people within the gospel” (:124). To understand this kind of hermeneutic requires one to look carefully for the key themes and values that guide African Christians as they approach the Bible. Instead of trying to describe their method

⁶ Mosala seems to find little of use in ASC hermeneutics for the ongoing struggle of social progress for the struggling black underclass of South Africa. He writes: “While it does enable them to negotiate their reality and even to resist the forces of brutalization with which the whole class is faced, their hermeneutical weapons are not drawn from concrete experiences of the work place and social life of its members. Instead, they are derived from the mystifications generated by the authoritative status of an unread Bible” (1996:55). And even more critically, he argues that the “African symbols and discourses that exist in AICs faith and practice are the only thing *black* (his emphasis) in their hermeneutics”.

or “science of interpretation,” it may prove more fruitful to explore how they approach the Bible, along with delineating some of the key themes found in their preaching and teaching.⁷

4.3 The Bible In The Hermon Church

HC members clearly articulate their belief that the Bible is the “Word of God” (*Lefoko la Modimo*), “the foundation for life” (*motheo wa botshelo*) and that it “gives wisdom and understanding for life”.⁸ Although Archbishop Madimabe has taken courses through Kgolagano College, a theological training institution organized by mainline churches in Botswana, one never sees him refer to any other books besides the Bible. Comments from a variety of church services all attest to the centrality of Scripture for the HC. Members are reminded that “the holy Word is to guide/care for (*go disa*) a person and everyone should pay attention to it”. In addition, “all who hold onto the Word will be comforted by it”.⁹ The power of Scripture was touted by one preacher who proclaimed: “The Word of God will perform miracles for those who believe”.¹⁰ The challenge is to follow the example of Jesus Christ, who “was not afraid of anything because he spoke the Word of God”.¹¹

⁷ Nthamburi and Waruta (1997:55-56) provide a helpful example of this kind of approach in their effort to catalog some common themes found in ASC preaching and teaching. Maluleke (1997:15) has summarized their findings as follows: “a quest for salvation/healing and wholeness, a keen awareness of human alienation, an appreciation of God’s promise to “put things right”, a desire to know how to deal with the spirit world, attaching importance to initiation rites, an awareness of God’s advocacy for the down-trodden, a sense of belonging in and to a visible community, commitment to social morality, and an intense concern for death and life beyond it”.

⁸ Personal Interviews with I. Tsholofelo (14 November 2003) and J. Madimabe (14 November 2003). This view of biblical authority within ASCs is affirmed by Daneel (1987:250), Ngada & Mofokeng (2001:26), Pretorius (2004:245) and Nthamburi & Waruta (1997:51-52).

⁹ HC, Sefophe (9 November 2003).

¹⁰ HC, Sefophe (12 October 2003).

¹¹ HC, Sefophe (26 October 2003).

4.3.1 Description Of The HC Preaching Event

One of the defining features of the preaching event within the HC context is its communal nature. Although the biblical passage is usually chosen by an individual leader, once it has been read (note the importance of orality) it belongs to the entire congregation and anyone, young or old, male or female, can share what they sense God has said to them through the text. The exposition and interpretation of the Scripture passage becomes a communal process of bonding where all participate in some manner. Many members preach, others pray, while the entire congregation sings when prompted by the speaker or the Spirit. The message is not delivered by one individual but by the entire congregation (see Dube 1996:120; Mijoga 2001:126).

As mentioned in chapter 3 (3.3.1.2), HC services normally begin with an extended period of time devoted to greeting one another, sharing concerns, prayer and singing. Following a communal recitation of the Lord's Prayer, one of the designated leaders will indicate the biblical passage for the preaching event. HC preaching tends to focus on one or perhaps two biblical texts at most, although those standing to comment are free to refer to other biblical passages if they desire. The following example illustrates some of the features mentioned already, and will help introduce a number of other important points regarding HC biblical interpretation.

During the Sunday service described below there were approximately 20 people in attendance at the Gaborone (Old Naledi) branch of the Hermon Church.¹² The biblical texts for the day were Joshua 14:6-13 and Matthew 25:37-40. The passage in Joshua is a record of Caleb's faithfulness during the Israelite conquest of the land, and his request to Joshua for the area surrounding Hebron. Joshua blessed Caleb and gave him the land as an inheritance. The Matthew text is found in the center of Jesus' story of the "sheep and the goats". The specific verses challenge listeners to realize that by caring for those in need, they actually care for Jesus himself.

¹² HC, Gaborone (10 August 2003).

Immediately following the reading of the passages, the congregation sang two well-loved hymns from *Lifela tsa Sione: Nyakallang lefatšeng lotlhe* (Rejoice all the world [#67]) and *Joko ea hao e bobebe* (Your yoke is easy [#53]). The first preacher was a young woman who got up slowly, and did not refer to the texts for the day but first shared her own as well as her relatives' struggles with various physical ailments. Then the congregation joined her as she started to sing a familiar chorus: *Ka madi a konyana, re pholositswe* (By the blood the lamb, we are healed/saved). At the conclusion of the chorus, she began a narration of John 5:1-9 where Jesus heals a man who had been sick for 38 years. As she concluded the story she began to sing another chorus: *Morena, naya tumelo, tumelo ya nnete* (Lord, give me faith, true faith). While still singing, she began to cry and express deep sorrow, at one point declaring that she did not want "to frustrate her angel" (*go swabisa lenyelo la me*). Abruptly she then did her best to repeat loudly and with great force the text of Matthew 25:37-40. She then returned to the last chorus and explained that she was singing that song because she was unwell, and needed greater faith to experience the touch of Jesus. It would also appear that her repetition of the Matthew 25:37-40 text was a fairly obvious attempt to place herself among the needy in Jesus' story.

When the young woman sat down, the congregation began to sing another hymn as an older woman got up to speak. She apologized for her inability to speak well, and then repeated Matthew 25:37-40. Without any commentary on that text, she moved immediately into a narration of the parable of the ten virgins found at the beginning of Matthew 25. She made little additional comment except to enjoin the congregation to be faithful at all times. Another hymn was then sung before a male leader confidently arose to retell the Joshua and Caleb story. His point was that God promised to give power to conquer. He then repeated the Matthew 25 text, and challenged the congregation to go to those in need and help them. At this point a member of the congregation began to sing the chorus: *Ke nna yo, Morena, ke nna yo, ke fitlhile* (I am here, Lord, I am here, I have come). Perhaps inspired by the song, the preacher related the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1-10), focusing on Jesus' declaration: "Today,

I am coming to your house.” It was Jesus’ willingness to go to a needy person that led to Zacchaeus’ conversion and commitment to return what he had stolen.

Following his sermon and another chorus, one of the primary female leaders of the church boldly stood to preach. She too repeated the story from Joshua, and then called on the congregation to exercise faith like Caleb who depended upon God to provide the victory. After singing two more choruses, she returned to the Matthew passage in order to remind her listeners that when helping others, we actually serve Jesus. She challenged them with the words: “The things that you are doing, are they really demonstrating faith in Christ? Let us pray at all times with zeal.” She then recounted the story of Jesus resurrecting the daughter of the ruler, and healing the woman who had been suffering with an incurable hemorrhage for twelve years (Mt. 9:18-25). Following her exposition she led the congregation in singing the *Lifela tsa Sione* hymn, *Haufi le Morena – Haufinyana* (Near the Lord, so very near [#138]). Clearly, she was calling the congregation to draw close to God. Focusing on the faith of the ruler, she declared: “Faith like that is amazing! If we have faith, we can be healed but we must reach out to Jesus. Let us pray more and more.” Two concluding choruses drove home the need to keep trusting in God: *Ntate we, Jehofa, re go tshepile* (My Father, Jehovah, we trust you) and *Ga go na yo tshwana le Jesu* (There is no one like Jesus).

4.3.2 Analysis Of The HC Preaching Event

4.3.2.1 Rhetorical Features And Song

In terms of rhetorical techniques employed by HC preachers, four aspects stand out.¹³ The first is the attitude of those preaching. HC preachers often request prayer before or while they are preaching; they may even admit they do not understand the passage well. Sometimes speakers will simply mention a specific prayer request and begin a hymn or chorus, and then sit down when the congregation has finished singing

¹³ Pretorius (2004:225-227) has a good description of common rhetorical techniques employed by Zionist preachers in Capetown. Most of the techniques he describes are also found in Botswana ASCs.

without having commented on the text. Other preachers have a much more confident demeanor but even they know they are subject to the congregation. Here is where the second rhetorical feature becomes important. There is constant interaction between the preacher and the congregation, whether it is through the preacher's blessing upon those listening ("Peace be with you", "God bless you"), or through singing. At times, preachers will initiate a song and the congregation will pick it up, while on other occasions someone from the congregation will start a song when they want to affirm or emphasize what the speaker has said, or perhaps even to give the person a chance to collect their thoughts.

Repetition is the third defining feature of the service, both in terms of comment on the biblical text as well as the characteristic pattern of singing hymns and choruses numerous times. Musa Dube (1996:120) notes the close linkage between repetition, dramatic narration and interpretation of the Scripture passage.

This traditional method of interpretation capitalizes on recalling, narrating, and dramatizing the story without explicitly defining what it means. Instead the meaning is articulated by graphically bringing the story to life through a dramatic narration. Those who lacked the gift of dramatic presentation still laid emphasis on the act of recalling and retelling the story almost verbatim.

During HC services it is standard practice for various members of the congregation to preach in a way that appears to be little more than simple repetition of the text. However, one must listen carefully for repeated comments, changes in volume and expression as well as the interjected songs.

A final rhetorical device of note is the presence of various vocal or bodily activities that suggest the person is under the influence of the Spirit. Sometimes preachers speak much more quickly than normal, inserting short phrases in tongues, or they may breathe heavily or sigh. Other times, their body may jerk, or one of their legs collapse and they will almost fall to the ground while preaching. This kind of activity is especially evident when the speaker or someone in the congregation leads out with a hymn that is particularly meaningful to the preacher. Many HC members have their own "spiritual song," "the song on their heart", or "the song that they really love" (*sefela se ke se ratang thata*). Sometimes referred to as their "staff", they depend on these songs to

move them into the Spirit. When they get up to speak in church, they will begin singing these hymns and the rest of the congregation will soon join with them. As the song progresses, it is common to see the person begin to show signs of being controlled by the Spirit. It is the song that has opened them up to the work of the Spirit, and thus suggests their message is coming directly from God.

Just as repeated versions of the sermon text helps to reinforce the message of those preaching, songs do so as well (Dube 1996:120). Hilary Mijoga (2001:140), in a study of Malawian ASCs, notes that songs serve a number of purposes in relation to the preaching act:

On the one hand, the songs were sung before the reading of the texts in order to arouse appropriate attitudes of the mind or soul in the listeners and to create an atmosphere of prayer. On the other hand, the songs were sung during exposition to affirm issues raised in the sermons and those that were sung after exposition were intended to summarize the messages of the sermons.

The same dynamic can be witnessed in the HC as the songs often have a direct connection with something that the preacher has just said. For example, during the exposition of John 5:1-6, the story of Jesus healing the man who had been an invalid for 38 years, the preacher broke into "Lord, give me faith, true faith". It is also noteworthy that songs during the preaching portion of the service are usually sung in their entirety, or at least most of the verses of the hymn are completed. This is unlike the music employed during the dance and prayer session (*go chateresa*) that follows where only choruses or single lines from hymns are repeated many times. It seems that the message conveyed through the music during the preaching event is of greater import than during the dance and prayer time, where music is primarily intended to help people get in tune with the Spirit.

4.3.2.2 Sermon Preparation

The importance of the Spirit for inspiration when preaching has already been mentioned but reliance upon angels should also be noted. Although not nearly as pronounced when compared to their role as agents of healing and prophetic revelation, HC preachers do on occasion explicitly refer to angels as the source of their utterance.

Commenting on Matthew 7:7-12, one preacher said plainly: “the angel has given me power to speak about this text” (*lengeloi le mphile maatla go bua ka temana e*).¹⁴ During another service, the preacher thanked God that she was able to be present on account of help from the angels. She then began singing “the angels of God have arrived” (*Manyeloi a Modimo a gorogile*) before preaching her message.¹⁵ A considerable amount of ambiguity surrounds the exact identity of the angels but it appears that they not only give prophetic words but also assist in the delivery of biblical teaching.¹⁶

Turning to the issue of sermon preparation, one finds that in the HC, like most ASCs in Botswana, preachers do not prepare a written sermon text prior to worship services. When discussing this topic, Archbishop Madimabe focused on the need for preachers to be led by the Spirit.¹⁷ While the congregation sings, the person assigned to lead the service is to pray and listen to the voice of the Spirit so that s/he knows which text to choose.¹⁸ The preachers who follow the original speaker add to the message as they are able – their role is “to complete the message from God” (*go tlatsa molaetsa o o tswang Modimong*). They may or may not add other biblical texts, depending on how the Spirit leads. Madimabe personally sees the process as a dialectical process between assessing the needs of the congregation and listening to

¹⁴ HC, Gaborone (4 October 2003).

¹⁵ HC, Gaborone (21 September 2003).

¹⁶ For further discussion concerning the nature and role of angels in the HC, see 5.4.2.5

¹⁷ This exact point was made in an HC service (9 November 2003). The congregation was reminded that the preacher gives the Scripture reading under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (*o a bo a tlhotlheleditswe ke Mowa o o Boitshupo*), therefore everyone should listen carefully to the words of God with both ears and store the words of God in their heart”. The Archbishop’s words confirm Anderson’s (1996:174) suggestion that “the experience of the Spirit becomes an essential and perhaps the most important key in the hermeneutical process”. And again, when he (2000c:135) argues that the Bible is used to explain (and perhaps justify) their experiences of the Spirit, “but also, perhaps more importantly, the experience of the Spirit enables people to better understand the Bible”.

¹⁸ Personal Interview (8 July 2007). Although Archbishop Madimabe did not explicitly refer to Matthew 10:19-20, where Jesus tells his disciples not to worry about what to say when questioned by authorities because the Spirit will speak through them, I have heard other ASC leaders use this passage as a rationale for not preparing sermons.

the voice of the Spirit. As he put it: “When I go to a church, I pray, I listen to the Spirit, I look at the mood of the congregation. What do they need? What is the Spirit of God saying? I look to the Spirit of God; I look to the people.”¹⁹ While he does not prepare a sermon text ahead of time, he is clearly deliberate in his attempts to meet the needs of the people he is addressing with biblical input.

4.3.3 HC Approach Towards The Bible

4.3.3.1 Relationship Of Spirit And Word

The close linkage of the Spirit with biblical interpretation was emphasized by a HC preacher who argued that “to understand the Bible, we need spiritual eyes.”²⁰ A similar point was made in a discussion of 1 Corinthians 2:15 where the Apostle Paul informs his readers that “the spiritual person judges all things and cannot be judged by anyone” (*wa mowa o atlhola tsotlhe, mme ene ka esi ga a atlholwa ke ope*).²¹ As people full of the Spirit, they are in a special position to understand the works and ways of God. But the spiritual nature of the Bible also raises the question as to exactly how they understand the apprehension of this power?

It has been observed that ASC members in various areas of Africa have sometimes used the Bible as an amulet, putting it under a pillow at night to protect them from evil forces (Adamo 2001:76-77). Others lay the Bible on the head of those being prayed for, believing that some inherent power in the book will be transferred to the person seeking help (Jenkins 2006:36-37).²² David Adamo (2001:54-60) has recorded numerous examples of how some West African churches use Bible verses as charms to

¹⁹ Mijoga (1996:365) notes the same emphasis on prayer and life experience with the people among ASC preachers in Malawi when they are preparing to speak.

²⁰ HC, Sefophe (16 November 2003).

²¹ HC, Sefophe (15 June 2005).

²² Nthamburi and Waruta (1997:54) describe it well: “the Bible is used almost as a magical document when laid upon someone; it can effect good or evil depending on the moral and spiritual condition of the person”.

deal with specific forms of spiritual attack. Of these practices, I can only confirm the practice of laying the Bible on the head of a person being prayed for in the HC. Another practice that elicits comment is that of using the Bible as a diagnostic tool in the healing process.²³ In this situation the Bible is first prayed over and then the prophet-healer or the patient open it at random and points to a verse without looking. Once the passage has been identified, they read it, pray and perhaps discuss it in an effort to discover the cause of the patient's malady and the cure. Both parties assume the Spirit will provide revelation through the Bible. That the Bible might take on this function is not surprising considering that upon introduction to the Bible by the first European missionaries, some Africans may have understood it to function something like the "bones" (*ditaola* or *bola*) used by traditional doctors to reveal problems (GO West 2002a:30-35).

The question that arises from these practices is whether HC members believe the Bible has some kind of "magical power" that they can manipulate for their purposes? While it appears that church members believe the Bible has some kind of inherent power to heal and protect, this is difficult to confirm as those who were asked to explain this practice asserted it was not the physical pages of the book that provided spiritual power, but faith in the Spirit who works through the book to provide answers for their specific problems (see Anderson 1996:180-81). This is why prayer is so critical in conjunction with the use of the Bible. Without faith, without the Spirit, no experience of power is possible.

It is in this light that one should approach the issue of biblical authority for the HC. As mentioned above (4.2.3), the potential for misuse exists when people simply equate the words of a preacher with the authoritative Word of God. This could easily take place in the HC as the Archbishop and other leaders are certainly viewed as powerful people in tune with the Spirit. However their practice of allowing all members of the congregation to preach or comment on biblical texts tends to encourage an awareness that God continues to speak to the whole congregation, not just the leaders. While the possibility of misinterpretation of Scripture is clearly present when people

²³ See Chapter 5 (5.4.3.3) for a full description.

have had little or no biblical training, their humble approach to the Bible seems to protect them from making overly dogmatic claims. As the following section will illustrate, it appears that this modest attitude stems from their dependence upon the Spirit for biblical illumination.

4.3.3.2 Hermeneutics Of The Spirit

As noted above, Musa Dube (1996) has made a strong argument that ASC hermeneutics are based upon a *semoya*, or spiritual, framework. In her interaction with some ASC female leaders, she (:116) found that when discussing the contentious passage where Jesus seems to refer to a Canaanite woman as a dog (Mt. 15:21-28), these women frequently reminded her that they were “discussing issues of the Spirit” (*re bua ka dilo tsa semoya*). Instead of reading the text in a way that marginalized or dehumanized the woman in the biblical story, they focused on her faith, and Jesus’ desire to heal and restore life. Based on her discussions, she concluded (:124) that *semoya* hermeneutics approaches the Bible with the presupposition or a bias towards healing of all relationships within society. Thus, when reading Scripture, ASCs are seeking healing in its most holistic sense (Dube 1996:126):

Another significant factor about their healing practices is that healing embraces all aspects of one’s life; that is, it includes tackling unemployment, breakdown of relationships, bad harvests, lost cows, evil spirits, bodily illness, and misfortune. In short, healing becomes an act of restoring and maintaining God’s creation against all forces that inhibit the fulfillment of individuals in society.²⁴

In line with Dube’s conclusions, a close examination of the manner in which the HC has interpreted a few biblical passages demonstrates their proclivity for seeking out a holistic “life-affirming and healing emphasis” when reading the Bible.

A rather obvious place to begin is with their foundational text, Psalm 133. As mentioned earlier (Chapter 2 [3.1]), this passage was given to the Archbishop through spiritual revelation. The emphasis on unity within the community (“How pleasant it is

²⁴ Anderson (1996:179) makes a very similar statement regarding ASC hermeneutics without giving it the label *Semoya*.

when brothers live together in unity!”), and the resulting blessing for life (“For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore”) provides a hermeneutical lens through which the HC views all of Scripture. This is the interpretive end towards which the Spirit leads.²⁵

Two of the most popular HC biblical passages, which were referred to regularly in sermons as well as personal conversations, are the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10 and the parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. The parable of the Ten Virgins is one of the Archbishop’s favorites, and he likes to use it to challenge his listeners to commit to God. But it is worth noting that the HC interpretation actually takes the passage in an interesting direction, as highlighted by the commentary of one HC preacher:

God is watching for the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins. You may find yourself waiting at the door, with the feast under way, and there will be no time to confess your weakness so that you might be interceded for and be healed (*gore o ka ipolela makoa a gagwe gore a tle a rapedisiwe a kgone a fole*). I want you to be like the five wise virgins whose lamps were not extinguished.²⁶

Instead of focusing on the eschatological return of Jesus, as is often the case, the preacher has “enlarged” the text to encompass a concern for healing in the present context, not just a challenge to the listener to prepare for entrance into heaven. In addition, the oil in the lamps was likened to the presence of the Spirit in one’s life. The message focused on uniting with the group and life in the Spirit.

This *semoya* perspective also comes into play in the HC position on women in ministry. Women are not only encouraged but expected to preach on a regular basis in Sunday services as well as other occasions.²⁷ In the Sefophe branch the preaching roster calls for the Archbishop to preach once every three weeks, with male and female

²⁵ GO West (2002b:73-74) argues that the “interpretive interests of ordinary African ‘readers’ of the Bible” are critical for understanding the ‘meaning’ they assign to biblical texts. For the HC, their reliance on Psalm 133 provides a valuable clue as to their interpretive interests.

²⁶ HC, Sefophe (4 February 2004).

²⁷ In RBP, it is also very common to find women preaching, and they have some women who serve as Senior Ministers.

preachers alternating during the weeks in between his sermons (women one week, men the following). He does this because he wants to enable his members to stand up confidently and preach in other congregations, and during prayer vigils or other public speaking events. Women have preached at every one of the many HC services that I have attended. When asked about this practice, and how it relates to their understanding of Scripture, the Archbishop said that one must read the biblical stories and see how Jesus dealt with women. When the Apostle Paul prohibited women from preaching, it was on account of a problematic situation in Corinth. But if we look at Jesus, he worked alongside women. In addition, women were the first to the empty tomb, they were the ones who stood at the cross and it was Martha who declared Jesus to be “the Christ” (see Jn. 11:27).²⁸ Again, we can see a certain dynamic at work when interpreting Scripture – the Bible should be interpreted creatively in a manner that builds up all members of the community.

This tendency to read biblical texts through a spiritual lens that focuses on the presence of the Spirit and a concern for harmony and healing is also present in HC music. The way they have slightly altered the words to the hymn, “*Re a go boka*” of *Lifela tsa Sione* (#12), provides an excellent example. The first line of the second stanza reads: *Re pholositsoe ka mohau* (we have been saved by mercy). While one cannot assume too much, it is likely that the missionary hymn writer, S. Rolland, had the Reformed understanding of eternal salvation by God’s grace in mind. However, when HC members sing this hymn, they substitute the words, *ke Moya* (by the Spirit) for *ka mohau* (by grace). When listening to it sung, the change is hardly noticeable but the theological import is immense.²⁹ With an enlarged understanding of the word “saved” (*pholositsoe*) to include a holistic understanding of healing and a focus on the Spirit, the line now praises God for his daily provision of spiritual healing in its broadest sense.

²⁸ Personal Interview (8 July 2007). Jenkins (2006:167-8) also notes that other ASCs have argued for the full participation of women in church life on account of their prominent role during Jesus’ life, crucifixion and resurrection.

²⁹ This is where an awareness of the oral nature of ASC life is critical. Few, if any, note the change in the hymn because almost no one uses a hymn book.

The following line (“with all your gifts”, *ka lineo tsohle tsa hao*) fits perfectly with this understanding, as it emphasizes the gifts of the Spirit.

This kind of hermeneutic is highly evident in much of music sung at HC, and one can see how it functions as a type of “coded resistance” or “hidden transcript” undermining Western authoritative readings of Scripture. The chorus, “The chariot of Elijah” (*Koloi ya Elija*), referred to in the previous chapter, demonstrates a desire to include even the angels in the community of God. This is an expansive hermeneutic that may appear rather haphazard at first, but when carefully examined, their bias towards the Spirit, healing and life emerges consistently in opposition to those who would exclude others or deny life. There is a certain ideology at work within this interpretive framework that seeks the greatest good for the entire community.

4.3.3.3 Relationship Between Testaments

The *semoja* perspective discussed above is also evident in the HC approach to the Old Testament. Regarding the issue of Mosaic law, many have commented on the ASC propensity to emphasize a legalistic interpretation over the message of grace found in the New Testament.³⁰ A number of HC members mentioned that the Old Testament and New Testament are equal in authority. While the New Testament may complete or “fill up” (*go tlatsa*) the Old Testament, it does not over-rule it. Evidence of a legalistic tendency certainly exists within the HC, although it seems they selectively choose specific laws which find congruence with Setswana custom.³¹ For example, the HC requires that their members observe the Mosaic prescriptions for mothers who have

³⁰ Extensive discussions regarding ASCs and the use of Mosaic law are found in Pauw 1960:142-145; and Mbiti 2004. That HC members have a bent towards a fundamentalist-legalistic approach to the Bible seems evident from their responses when asked how the Bible helps them (Questionnaire [#45]). Almost half (48%) responded with some variation of the idea that it enables them “to refrain from evil and to know the commands of God”.

³¹ ASCs have been able to find many points of contact between Hebrew culture and their own culture and customs. This is why Mbiti (2004:223) suggests: “Thus, the Jewish Bible gives them a place where, with full confidence, they can locate and identify themselves. In contrast, the New Testament does not so explicitly provide such a universal place of identity”.

given birth (Lev. 12:1-5). If they have a son, the child is blessed after 8 days and the man and woman are brought together by the Archbishop for a cleansing bath (taken separately) and the woman remains in seclusion for another 33 days. If she has a daughter, the same procedure is followed except that the blessing takes place after 14 days and the woman stays in seclusion for 66 days. The blessing involves making the sign of the cross with a mixture of water and ash on the top of the child's head. Some form of this custom is practiced by almost all Batswana, Christian or not, and thus while the HC has modified a traditional practice, it is clear that in this case, the cultural precedent was set long before the Bible arrived in Botswana.³² That said, it is also clear that they have appropriated biblical authority for their signs and rituals.

The previous illustration demonstrates the manner in which the HC continues to practice Mosaic proscriptions. But such practices should be tempered with an understanding that their views are far more nuanced than outside commentators often realize. As the Archbishop pointed out on one of my visits, sometimes there are contingencies.³³ He immediately directed my attention to an issue that was literally right in front of us. The night previous to my arrival, one of his cattle had accidentally been allowed onto the road and was struck by a car and killed. When he was informed in the morning, he took his donkey cart out to the spot and salvaged as much of the meat as possible, bringing it home. The carcass was now in one corner of the courtyard where we were visiting. He knew full well that Mosaic law prohibits the eating of something found dead as it will defile the person (see Lev. 11:39-40; 22:8; Dt. 14:21). But, he told me, God understands the need for people to live. They had been experiencing another difficult drought year, and to allow the meat to simply go to waste would be wrong.

The Archbishop went on to elaborate. Many of the Mosaic laws were given on account of the hardness of people's hearts (see Mk. 10:5-6); therefore, one must focus on relationships between people. He challenged me to consider the story of the woman

³² Ngada & Mofokeng (2001:26-27) argue that ASCs do not read African traditional beliefs back into the Bible, rather the Bible has confirmed many things they already believed.

³³ Personal Interview (7 July 2007).

caught in adultery (Jn. 8:1-11) and connected it to James 3:1-12 where the destructive nature of the tongue is described. According to Madimabe, the main problem in the story of the woman caught in adultery was the harmful effects of gossip and the way it was destroying community. Many people had become involved in the affair, and that is why Jesus focused on the sin of those who wanted to judge the woman. According to the Archbishop they had an “evil spirit” (*mowa o o maswe*). They wanted to destroy all that is good in the world – life and relationships. His point from this example was that Mosaic law is very important, but it must be subservient to the higher value of life and community. Even the emphasis on the Mosaic food laws is understood from this perspective. They do not follow these rules in order to “get to heaven” but in order to remain pure and preserve life and health in the present.

In this matter of the relationship between Testaments, the oral nature of HC faith is important to note once again. Prior to the arrival of Christianity, Batswana knew about God and the Spirit. The only member of the Trinity unfamiliar to them was Jesus, and one could argue that he arrived in a book, the Bible, brought by missionaries. Although somewhat over-stated, Larson (1989:50) makes a valid point: “Literate church communities have in the main tended to major almost exclusively on Christology, whose source is a written record to which no further material is being added”. The HC, in contrast, is open to the Spirit’s direction as they read the entire Bible, looking for resources that will enhance their lives, and help them deal with unfamiliar influences.

4.3.3.4 Re-living The Text

One other notable feature of the HC approach to the Bible is their willingness to place themselves directly into biblical stories. Various examples of this practice can be cited from both Old and New Testaments. The healing practice of submersing themselves seven times is based directly on the events of the healing the Syrian military officer, Naaman, who was instructed by Elisha to wash himself seven times in the Jordan River (2 Ki. 5:1-15). The same dynamic is at work when the church gathers to bless a newborn child. The Scripture passages employed on these occasions are from

Luke 1 and 2. At the beginning of the ritual, someone reads Luke 1:57-66, except that they substitute the name of the newborn for the biblical name, John, when they arrive at verses 60 and 63. They follow the same procedure when reading Luke 2:21-24, which records the circumcision of Jesus. When they reach verse 24, where the instruction to offer a sacrifice of a pair of doves or two young pigeons is mentioned, they substitute a revised requirement of two 50 thebe coins.

But the biblical events that are most pertinent in this regard surround Jesus' final days before his crucifixion and resurrection. Every Easter all the church branches make their way to Sefophe on the Thursday prior to Good Friday so that they can worship together. The church does more than preach about the biblical events; they re-enact certain parts of the story. Each year they read John 13:1-17 and then the leaders of the church wash the feet of all members. They celebrate the Lord's Supper together just as Jesus did with his disciples (Mt. 26:20-29; Mk. 14:17-25; Lk. 22:17-20), and when preaching they challenge each other with the betrayal of Judas, the denials of Peter, and the inability of the disciples to stay awake and pray. On Saturday evening they gather for one more all night service, starting with account of Jesus' burial and the guard at the tomb (Mt. 27:57-66). But somewhere around 2-3 am on Easter Sunday, the focus changes and only women are allowed to preach about the empty tomb and Jesus' resurrection. Women have the honor of preaching because they were the first witnesses to the miraculous events of that first Easter.

The effect of re-living the biblical stories is powerful. An intimacy with the biblical text is created as HC members enter into the events and apply them directly to their experience. The events described in the biblical stories did not just happen thousands of years ago; they have a power to impact one's life immediately. There is a sense that God is meeting not just the individual but the community in the same powerful manner that the biblical characters experienced. This approach brings the Bible to life in a way that no historical critical explanation of a text could ever hope to accomplish.

4.3.3.5 Prophetic Revelation And The Biblical Text

There has also been considerable discussion regarding the relationship between the authority of the Bible and ASC prophetic revelation. Numerous scholars have claimed that “the Bible is generally accepted as the authoritative Word of God while its divine origin and its significance in the life of the believer is unquestioned” (Pretorius 2004:245; also Daneel 1987:250). However based on his contact with various ASC leaders, Philip Jenkins has challenged this simple analysis. Based on a discussion with a female ASC bishop, Jenkins (2006:167) claims: “Yet her experience indicates a common feature of literalist approaches to the Bible, namely that the text offers a variety of possible approaches to the matter, leaving much latitude to the individual guided by prophetic or charismatic experience”. In the same vein, he quotes another bishop: “She respects the authority of the Bible. She is also very open to God’s continued revelation”. As seen above, this appears to be the position adopted within the HC as well by means of their *semoya* hermeneutic.

This openness to new revelation does appear to create a tension between biblical preaching and prophetic revelation. Archbishop Madimabe lamented on a number of occasions that some people purposely came late to services because they only want to dance (*go chaterese*), instead of learning to obey the Word of God. One major distinction between the preaching event and the healing ritual which follows is that there are few, if any, references to the Bible during the prophetic utterances and charismatic manifestations. The authority of the prophets does not arise from their association with the Bible, but on account of their connection to the Spirit.

The church leaders are clearly aware of the potential for misuse when members simply equate the words of a preacher with the authoritative Word of God, or the declarations of a prophet with the powerful voice of the Spirit. On a number of occasions, this danger was addressed in sermons, and not surprisingly Matthew 7:13-23 was one of the favorite passages. In this text, Jesus warns his followers to watch out for false prophets. The false prophets are easily distinguished from the true by their

actions (“by their fruit you will know them”), and their unwillingness to perform the will of the Father. As might be expected, “good fruit” and the “will of the Father” were defined in line with promoting life, harmony and healing. Church members were warned not to “play with the gift of God and make oneself out to be a prophet, for those people will die in their sin. Pay attention to how you treat people for the fruit you are planting has not yet come to fruition”.³⁴ On another occasion, the Archbishop referred to the story of the Elijah and the prophets of Baal (I Ki. 18:16-40).³⁵ Here the focus was on the importance of the fulfillment of the prophetic word. While the prayer of Elijah was confirmed by fire from heaven, the impotence of the Baal prophets was displayed by their complete lack of results. From these examples, it appears that while the HC prophets have considerable latitude in proclaiming their spiritual revelations, they still must submit to the broad guidelines established in Scripture. As mentioned, the nature of those guidelines has already been established within the spiritual hermeneutic framework.

4.3.4 Summary

The description and analysis of the HC preaching event, along with a discussion of their approach to the Bible, has confirmed their communal and experiential approach to biblical interpretation. But perhaps more importantly has been the discussion of their willingness to allow a spiritual hermeneutic to become the interpretive lens through which they determine the meaning of specific texts. Their belief that the Spirit continues to speak, guide and direct provides the possibility for creativity when approaching the text, and may even undermine established interpretations when necessary. One discovers a willingness to employ this ideological tactic in order to challenge the oppressive forces around them and affirm a life-giving message. The key interpretive question is whether or not an exposition accords with the established ideals of the HC community. To a certain degree this hermeneutical process is comparable to that

³⁴ HC, Gaborone (9 November 2003).

³⁵ HC, Sefophe (2 November 2003).

practiced by those espousing liberation theology. They have argued that the Bible must be read from the perspective of the marginalized because of the “epistemological privilege” they benefit from on account of “God’s preferential option for the poor” (Bosch 1991:435-438). In effect, biblical texts pass through a certain grid that promotes agreed-upon communal values and principles.

This is where the delineation of identity markers found in Chapter Three becomes especially pertinent to this discussion, for as one would expect, there is a clear convergence in the themes discussed. The tendency to interpret texts in a manner that promotes life and harmony within the community lines up closely with their identity markers: a community that espouses Setswana values, a focus on peace and relational harmony in its broadest sense, an emphasis on spiritual power that heals and reconciles, an encouragement to hope even in difficult circumstances and a freedom to worship in the Spirit. In effect, one can argue that this holistic “life-affirming and healing emphasis” becomes the primary interpretive framework for understanding the Bible. By means of this hermeneutic, they are able to establish a counter-ideology that is both drawn from, and confirmed by, the Bible.

4.4 The Bible In Goodnews Ministries

The Bible for GM members is the Word of God, and is believed to possess incredible power to change one’s life. Akofang Andreck said it simply: “The Word of God is the greatest power, and the greatest power that has happened to me is a message that changed my life completely”. Another leader, David Rasefako, claims that “everything at GM is evaluated by the Word of God”.³⁶ According to a number of members, their holiness ethic, stronger than that of other churches, is derived directly from their commitment “to preach the uncompromised Word of God”. The absolute authority of the Word of God is regularly affirmed through songs like: “If Jesus said it,

³⁶ Personal Interviews with A. Andreck (17 June 2005) and D. Rasefako (20 June 2005). At BLM, they say the Bible is the “blueprint for life”, the “strainer” used to evaluate culture and the “seed” that when planted in the heart can create growth and life. These descriptions are from personal interviews with T. Mokaila (20 May 2002), M. Mokgwathise (8 May 2002) and E. Bannerman (17 May 2002).

fine, I believe it; His Word cannot lie”.³⁷ But to understand the Word correctly one must have the Spirit of God as natural intelligence may actually obscure the message instead of illuminate it. As the Apostle Monnakgosi preaches, faith in God leads one to declare: “If the Word says it, I believe it, and that settles it”.³⁸ To obtain the maximum benefit from what the Bible teaches, one has to accept the Word by faith.

4.4.1 Description Of The GM Preaching Event

4.4.1.1 Introduction To The Word Of God

The build-up to the preaching event at GM is rather extensive due to the lengthy period (30-60 minutes or more) of praise singing, worship and prayer that takes place prior to preaching. In addition, greetings, testimonies, announcements, and the taking of tithes and offerings are also included in the preliminaries to the sermon proper. Even though each of these elements of the service are highly significant, they are all viewed as the introduction to the main event as the following examples illustrate.

It is common for the Master of Ceremonies (MC) at GM to make a few brief comments prior to introducing the preacher. On one Sunday, the person in charge admonished the congregation as follows: “The Lord has spoken to us through his Word but we have not received it (referring to Jeremiah 6:10)”. She went on to relate a vision where she saw “hands breaking the chains that are binding people, but some are still bound because when he speaks to us, we take him for granted. Who out there will listen to the Lord? Let us hear the Word of God as he speaks through his servant.”³⁹ Following this introduction, the choir sang two songs, and when Apostle Monnakgosi got up from his seat to move toward the pulpit, the congregation was enjoined to stand to welcome the preacher and join the choir in song. When greeting the congregation, Monnakgosi immediately set the tone for what to follow in his sermon. His first

³⁷ The rest of the chorus continues: “If it is written in the Bible, I’ll believe it till he comes; Though the mountains be cast into the sea, God’s Word abides forever, through all eternity.”

³⁸ GM, Gaborone (24 March 2002).

³⁹ GM, Gaborone (13 April 2003).

instructions were direct: “Tell your neighbor, ‘be blessed’! Tell someone next to you, ‘The Word is nice’.” Then he boldly declared, “Welcome to the ministry of the Word. I don’t know what we would do if we didn’t have the Word.” Finally, with a smile on his face, he asserted that now was the time everyone had been anticipating: “Now it is time to eat, time to get excited, the time for fine dining.”

All of these examples emphasize the high priority placed on preaching within GM. The words of the MC are especially important for they demonstrate the clear linkage between the voice of God and the speaker. The words coming from the speaker’s mouth are not just words from an ancient book, but the very words of God for the present time. On another occasion, Rev. M. Moremi made this point explicitly when praying for spiritual empowerment for a young preacher.

We thank you Father for the servant of the Lord that you have appointed, Father, and anointed him tonight, heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus and for commissioning him, Father, to minister the Word of God. We thank you, Jehovah, we give all our praise and glory that, Father, you have touched him in the name of Jesus with your fire and your power. And Father, he’s a vessel of honour, even tonight. *Father, he is willing to declare the oracles of God in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Father, we pray that we shall hear your voice even tonight, our heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ. We pray that, Father, we shall not hear voices but that we shall hear the voice of God, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (emphasis mine).*

Father minister the Word to us in Jesus’ name, the Word that changes with your might, the Word that empowers, the Word that gives life and Spirit in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, we pray that, Lord, you will make a revival. Father, spring forth in this very place, that we will swim in the revival of God and in the revelation of the power and the glory of the Lord, in Jesus’ name. Father, we thank you, we bless your name. In the name of Jesus, we pray.⁴⁰

In this case, there was an explicit request that God work in the preacher so that the audience would not merely hear a simple explanation of the biblical text but that empowered by the Spirit of God, the words of the preacher and the voice of God would fuse into one.

⁴⁰ GM, Gaborone (13 March 2002). This observation concurs with the findings of M. Masenya (2005:38): “The preachers and teachers are believed, just as in the case of the biblical prophets, to be speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, proclaiming the Word of God to the people”.

4.4.1.2 Preaching The Word Of God

Unlike in the HC, GM sermons rarely, if ever, deal with only one passage of Scripture. Instead, GM preachers regularly make reference to numerous passages, and will often string together multiple texts from memory so that it almost appears as though the Word is literally spilling out of them. GM sermons also tend to last considerably longer than at the HC as the preacher will often speak for an hour or longer (although one should remember that all GM sermons are translated from English to Setswana, or on rare occasions, in the opposite order). One can easily detect a clear preference for English when preaching and reading, as the translation almost always moves from English to Setswana.⁴¹

Although condensed, the following description of a preaching event provides a helpful illustration of both preaching style and content. Apostle Monnakgosi was the preacher, and the title of the sermon is “Workers with God”.⁴² As an introduction to his message, he read from Genesis 1:26-30 and 2:6-9, and then began by comparing two types of “workers” found in the Bible. He rather quickly pointed out that there are workers of iniquity (Lu. 13:17), deceit (2 Cor. 11:13) and evil (Phil. 3:2). Turning to more positive images of workers, he referred to a variety of passages (Mt. 9:37-38; Rom. 16:21; Col. 4:11; I Cor. 3:9), and emphasized that 2 Timothy 2:15, where the instruction is given to be an approved workman who correctly handles the word of truth, does not exclude women. The text in I Corinthians 3:9 received special attention due to the phrase, “we are labourers together with God” (KJV). At that point, Monnakgosi returned to Genesis 1 and argued that God has always intended that people would be co-workers with him, and so he entrusted them with a specific mandate (“gave them dominion”). He explained the idea of “dominion” as follows: “God gave them power and authority for when God gives a mandate, he gives the necessary strength and power”. Turning quickly to Genesis 5:1-2, he continued with the same theme of power:

⁴¹ The predilection for English at GM was especially apparent at a midweek evening service (15 June 2005) when not one Setswana Bible could be found among the audience of approximately 50 members.

⁴² GM, Gaborone (13 April 2003).

God called them, 'Adam', full of strength and the power of God. Man was made to be like God, to operate like God, made to be a 'little god' (see Psalm 82:6). This does not mean a man should say he is a little god, for that would be prideful. But God gave them power to rule over fish, fowl, cattle and then he blessed them. God said, 'I have given you.' You see, 'God is a giver!'

Abruptly he then directed the congregation to touch someone and say, "God is a giver, and the world is a taker".

After everyone had followed his instructions, he continued by emphasizing that when God gives, he expects us to receive with thanksgiving. Christians should not "take" but wait patiently for God to give, for "the devil took, he didn't receive" (referring to Is.14:12-15 and Ezek. 28:15-17). Those who take instead of receiving will miss the blessings of being a giver. This led immediately into a challenge to choose life and blessings (see Deut. 30:19), for God has given his children a choice. Then he returned to Genesis and reminded the congregation that God had given the first people all created plants for their use. The implication of this statement was that "if you work in the will of God, you will be well-fed, you will be well taken care of. When God instructs, even though it may seem impossible, it's amazing how he will provide". As illustrations, he referred to God's provision of an alternative sacrifice for Isaac (Gen. 22), and a child, Samuel, for Hannah when she cried out in prayer (I Sam. 1). She then gave the child back to God and he became a great prophet and judge over the people of Israel.

Returning to his previous point, Monnakgosi emphasized that what you give to God, he will give back to you. "As you work for him and with him, he releases a blessing on you". Drawing on Hebrews 12:5-6, he challenged the congregation to believe that God will never leave or forsake them. "Don't say, I can't, I don't have money. God will provide". And to make his point, he gave a personal testimony of divine provision in his own life. He had felt called to travel to Maun (in northwestern Botswana) to meet a person in need. God had told him to rent a car, but he had no money, but he went ahead anyway, made a plan, and then someone gave him Pula 30 for food. He then received Pula 300 from someone else but it was not enough until another person gave him an additional Pula 600. His application: "God releases his resources when you decide to be a worker with him – he will release his blessings".

The sermon continued along similar lines for an additional 20 minutes, with references to numerous other passages until Monnakgosi reached his conclusion. His last text was I Corinthians 3:13-15, where the Apostle Paul warns his readers that all their work will be tested on the Day of Judgment. Jesus is coming and therefore we should live both righteously and by faith, for “faith releases the power and anointing to defeat the struggles you have been facing”. He then led the congregation in singing a short chorus: “In the name of Jesus, touch us, save us, empower us”. The final act in the preaching event was the altar call. While the congregation was singing, many with their eyes closed, hands in the air, some with tears, he gave this invitation:

Life outside of Christ is tiring, full of problems, but the problem is you! You need to turn your life over to God today. It is not enough to be religious and go to church. You must come forward and receive life and power (*said with emphasis*) to overcome your problems and difficulties. Become a co-worker with God and enjoy his blessings.

Many in the congregation did go forward for prayer while some fell down either laughing or crying. All this activity was assumed to be the work of the Spirit through the Word of God, as evidenced by Apostle Monnakgosi’s declaration: “The Word is powerful – it is the sword of the Spirit – and it brings power and faith into our lives”.

4.4.2 Analysis Of The GM Preaching Event

4.4.2.1 Rhetorical Features

The remarkable confidence exuded by GM preachers is palpable. As these well-dressed men (and women) and their translators approach the pulpit, the congregation is primed to expect a message that will empower them to succeed in life.⁴³ Although many preachers prepare sermon notes, it is rare to see them referred to, as GM preachers prefer to speak extemporaneously. They often move freely around the stage and dramatically act out both biblical stories and personal testimonies. Even though they make copious references to the Bible, most often they will simply quote from memory or paraphrase the passage for the audience. That said, the Bible is a constant

⁴³ This is even more pronounced in BLM where the charismatic Dr. Sitima is often escorted to the stage by a group of impeccably dressed male elders.

reference point and many preachers will hold up an open copy, or lay it conspicuously on the pulpit. They know well that their authority is largely derived from their ability to maintain the connection between their message and the written Word of God.

Translators also play an important role, as their ability to render smoothly the preacher's message into Setswana (most often) is critical in order to maintain the flow, energy and emotion of the sermon. With some of the best translators, the presentation almost appears as a choreographed event as the translator both mimics as well as interprets the actions, vocal tone and facial expressions of the preacher. The effect is dramatic as the congregation is drawn into the spectacle before them and invited to participate in mind, soul and spirit. Direct appeals to audience involvement are also frequent. Although the description above of the preaching event only included one example ("God is a giver, and the world is a taker"), it is common for preachers to instruct the congregation to turn to their neighbors and repeat a short word of encouragement ("Revival is coming"), a phrase from Scripture ("I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength") or a personal commitment ("I will live by faith"). Ogbu Kalu (2003b:101) rightly affirms that "Pentecostal homiletics is choreographed as a ritual of validation and commitment". While the preacher and translator are clearly the main actors, the congregation also plays an important role in the event.

4.4.2.2 Role Of The Congregation

As mentioned above, the congregation is actively involved in the sermon event, whether it is in response to the injunctions from the pulpit to speak to their neighbors, shout encouragement to the preacher ("Amen", "Thank you, Jesus") or sing when so instructed. Moreover, it is striking to observe the shift in audience participation that takes place as the preacher begins his or her oration. From a level of high physical and emotional energy during the praise and worship session, the audience quickly moves into the role of student and learner. Demonstrating a high level of literacy, almost all the congregation produce Bibles so that they can follow along with the preacher, while many also use notebooks and pens in order to capture the key points of the sermon. In

addition, many members of the congregation will listen to the recorded messages in the following days and weeks. The role of the congregation is most pronounced at the conclusion of the sermon when they are given an opportunity to respond by coming forward for prayer and the laying on of hands. By this act, the congregation demonstrates that the Spirit has transmitted the Word of God into their lives, and that word is now exercising a power over them. Ogbu Kalu (1998:12) has described the impact as follows: “Answering the altar call is like a degradation ritual which ensures that they can now act differently and perceive the world very differently”. The self-identity of GM members as well as their view of the world is shaped by the message and ideology they receive at each service.

4.4.2.3 Sermon Preparation

As mentioned above GM preachers make copious references to the Bible, rarely making a claim without providing some kind of Scriptural justification. Their ability to quote verses from memory is intended to demonstrate great immediacy with the text, as though they had ingested it and internalized its power.⁴⁴ That said, it is rare for preachers to explore methodically one particular text, preferring instead simply to pick and choose the particular point that validates their point. Nevertheless this style of preaching requires one to spend a considerable amount of time studying the Bible prior to the sermon in order to find those passages that support one’s arguments. According to Apostle Monnakgosi, this is an important element in the preparation process for “one cannot make a doctrine out of one Scripture – you must have multiple passages”.⁴⁵

Ostensibly, sermon topics are to be governed by the direction of the Holy Spirit; however broad themes are chosen for each calendar year. For example, in 2005, all preaching and teaching was to focus on the following theme: “Walking in the presence of the Almighty God (*El Shaddai*) daily, fulfilling his purposes through true holiness unto

⁴⁴ Coleman (2000:128), analyzing Swedish charismatics, makes a similar observation: “In this view, the text is embodied in the person, who becomes a walking, talking representation of its power”.

⁴⁵ Personal Inter view (6 July 2005).

the coming of Christ". Although this may appear to hinder the freedom of the Spirit, church leadership would argue that this theme only emerged after a considerable period of prayer and fasting. In other words, the theme itself had been revealed through the guidance of the Spirit.⁴⁶

It is also interesting to note that while GM leadership is predominantly male, there is considerable room for female leaders and preachers. Women often teach and preach publicly, and they regularly serve as translators and directors of worship services. Age also does not seem to be a limiting factor as many young adults function as pastors throughout the country. Apostle Monnakgosi made his views clear in one of his sermons:

God will use whoever is available, and whatever is available. This is very important; if you refuse to allow God to use you, like in the case of Balaam, he will use a donkey. And he says to you and me that if we refuse to preach this gospel, if we refuse to tell the Good News, he will make stones preach. He will make the trees preach the gospel.⁴⁷

Reliance on the Spirit allows GM to bypass many of the more standardized requirements of more established churches where those who preach need to have completed a specific course of study.

4.4.3 GM Approach Towards The Bible

4.4.3.1 Spirit, Word And Testimony

One of the distinguishing features of GM preaching is the demand for a personal experience of the power of Holy Spirit. The importance of personal testimony can hardly be overstated as sermons are almost guaranteed to contain miraculous stories of God's provision, intervention and protection. In the description above, Monnakgosi claimed that God is faithful to supply, and validated his point with biblical examples, but then solidified his argument with his own indisputable example of God's provision. One of the GM pastors, D. Mokhokhele, highlighted this requirement for a powerful

⁴⁶ D.D. Monnakgosi, Personal Interview (6 July 2005).

⁴⁷ GM, Gaborone (January 2001). Accessed June 2005.

connection with the Holy Spirit when he argued that in order to teach the Word of God effectively the key is “the help of the Holy Spirit; experience is what really matters, not training”.⁴⁸ This is a critical tactic and a prime example of the conscious use of agentive power in opposition to competing ideologies – it is extremely difficult to discount claims from personal experience.

The dialectic relationship between Spirit and Word in GM is also demonstrated through prophetic words from both preachers and the congregation. In the following example, a young woman loudly declared a “word from the Lord” during a period of congregational prayer: “I am the God of the broken-hearted. Be patient because I will fulfill my word to you. I know what I have spoken, and I will fulfill it. Don’t lose heart in your tribulation, persecution, and situation. I will know my promises to you and I will fulfill them”.⁴⁹ This “word” was interspersed with both tearful sobs and exuberant outburst of tongues-speaking. The effect of this kind of prophetic utterance is to heighten the spiritually charged atmosphere, engender faith in the congregation and validate the Word of God - based sermon that was to follow.

4.4.3.2 The Word Of God And Faith

In Chapter Two (see 2.3.2) it was noted that early converts to Christianity in Botswana were referred to as “people of the Word”. They had a special power because they could read the book delivered by the missionaries, and understand the doctrines taught within it. At GM the power of the Bible lies less in reciting doctrinal statements, and much more on appropriating what the Bible promises by faith. The Word of God creates an image of what is possible in a person’s heart – it builds hope. GM members are reminded that if one “take[s] hold of this truth [*referring a number of biblical promises*], [one] can never be defeated”.⁵⁰ One of their choruses boldly proclaims:

⁴⁸ Personal Interview (18 February 2002).

⁴⁹ GM, Gaborone (26 January 2003).

⁵⁰ GM, Gaborone (24 March 2002). Scripture passages referred to were John 10:10, Isaiah 1:19 and I Corinthians 13:13.

“Every promise in this Book is mine”. Agreement with this doctrine is borne out by the results of the Questionnaire (#68), as all GM members believe their lives are going to improve in the future. The rationale for their confidence often stems from the promises of Scripture. Many would agree with the respondent who claimed: “God promises in Jeremiah 29:11 to give me a prosperous future” (#69 as well as #45).

The vital link between the Word of God and faith is continually driven home through GM preaching and teaching: “If the Word says it, I believe it, that settles it. To believe is to agree with what God has said”.⁵¹ A short excerpt from another sermon explains that in order to obtain faith, one must internalize the Word.

We must continue walking in faith, because without faith it is impossible to please God. For they that come to God must believe that He is, and that he will honour those who seek Him. For faith can never fail; God can never fail. Faith is indestructible. God is indestructible. You are indestructible as long as you walk in faith. Get the faith inside of your heart.

How do you get this faith? Get the Word inside of you. God says in Psalm 119 (*verse 11*): “Thy Word have I kept in my heart, that I will not sin against you.” When you keep the word in your heart, you will not sin against God. Whatever sin, or devil, everything [that] rises against you, you know what God will do. He will make fun of the devil. He will make fun of your enemy.⁵²

In order to experience victory and success Christians must “hunger for the Word”, “receive the Word”, and as illustrated above, they are invited to “eat the Word”. By spiritually consuming the Word of God, GM members believe they can access its power in all areas of life.⁵³

In order to experience biblical power fully, one cannot merely concur with GM teaching intellectually. Much more powerful is a positive confession of faith based on a vision from the Word of God. An example from a BLM leader is helpful: “If someone is

⁵¹ GM, Gaborone (24 March 2002).

⁵² GM, Gaborone (January 2001). Accessed June 2005.

⁵³ Coleman (2000:129) makes the following observation: “People come to regard themselves as physically assimilating and thereby actually being taken over by scripturally derived (or legitimated) words”.

ill they need to get the Word for healing and sow it into their heart, speak it out of their mouth and renew their mind with it”.⁵⁴ The same is true concerning finances or family problems. Accessing God’s power is as simple as finding specific texts that speak to one’s particular problem and then focusing on those texts. “Verses from Scripture, if chosen correctly and spoken by someone empowered by the Holy Spirit, can ostensibly help create the health and well-being desired by the speaker, including success in the process of passing faith on to others” (Coleman 2000:131). The key to prosperity is to ingest the Word, speak it out loud in faith and give thanks for what God has already done. In this view the Word has an inherent power to create a new reality, and therefore to express doubt is a sure way of destroying the seed of the Word that has been planted.⁵⁵

4.4.3.3 Hermeneutic of Empowerment

As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, any effort to delineate a specific hermeneutical method for NPCs is doomed to failure. A similar dynamic is at work in GM hermeneutics as was observed when discussing the HC approach to Scripture. A few key themes seem to emerge regularly in GM sermons. There is not so much a hermeneutical method but a hermeneutical grid through which all Scripture must pass. This grid can rightfully be described as their ideological framework, a way of establishing their place in the world. Since the description of the GM self-identity in Chapter Three (3.3.2) has already overviewed key aspects of the GM ideology, I will only highlight a few points here.

⁵⁴ E. Bannerman, Personal Interview (17 May 2002).

⁵⁵ Monnakgosi, Personal Interview (7 May 2002). “What a person believes separates them from others – gives being and identity to a person. You must keep believing and act upon it. You must confess and believe and then it will happen”. The primary Scripture text used to support this doctrine is Mark 11:22-24: “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. “I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen; it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (NIV).

The most obvious place to begin is with their emphasis on power, success and victorious Christian living.⁵⁶ Although dealing with Ghanaian NPCs, the assertion of Paul Gifford (2005:85) is particularly apt in the Botswana context as well: “First, this Christianity is about success. A Christian is a success; if not, something is very wrong”. The sermon overview provided at the outset (4.4.1.2) is full of examples of this type of thinking with its references to Christians as “little gods”, God’s promises to give and bless the faithful, and the call to come forward to receive “life and power”. The GM focus on power for victory and success in all areas of life was highly pronounced in the responses to the Question inquiring how the Bible helped members (Appendix 1, #45). As expected, there was a wide range of answers but many respondents focused on either instruction for a godly lifestyle (“teaches me how I should live”) or the benefits they received (“meets my needs both physically and spiritually”).

This focus on power and success is wed to the two-kingdom theology that GM shares with most other NPCs. Based on Gospel narratives describing Jesus’ conflict with demonized individuals along with the Apostle Paul’s references to “principalities and powers” (Eph. 6:10-18), these churches envision a cosmic battle between God and Satan, the results of which are experienced on earth (Wessels 1997:362-65; Kalu 2000b:120-126). Often equating traditional Setswana rites with demonic activity, GM draws a thick line between themselves and those who continue to engage in these activities. References to the devil and his demons abound in GM preaching as the sermon excerpt above illustrates. Satan is portrayed as a powerful foe who kills, steals, destroys, deceives, seduces, and crushes the hope of the unbeliever, while standing impotently before those who wield the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, by faith. As the chorus proclaims: “Winner, winner, Jesus, you are a winner. Loser, Loser, Satan you are a loser”.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ This theme has been highlighted by many commentators on NPCs. Focusing specifically on the NPC approach to the Bible, Gräbe (2002:225-226) states: “It is the conviction of the essay that this biblical focus on the power of God is one of the reasons why Pentecostalism has been such a potent movement in a variety of cultural contexts” (225).

⁵⁷ GM, Gaborone (22 June 2003).

The GM emphasis on power for success spills over into all areas of life. Christians should expect progress, prosperity, blessing, abundance and breakthroughs. Although the gospel of financial prosperity is not as pronounced at GM as at BLM,⁵⁸ the message still reverberates through much of their communication. As an elaboration of Joshua 1:8, the following words were spoken just prior to receiving an offering: “God waits for us to prosper ourselves. If we live according to God’s Word, we will make our way prosperous. God waits for us to prosper ourselves by his Word, his promises, his principles”. Then turning to Luke 6:38, the congregation was reminded that as you give it will be given to you. “God will give only as we give, for blessed is the hand that gives more than the one that receives”.⁵⁹

Perhaps more pronounced than in some NPCs, the power to live a holy life also features prominently in the GM hermeneutical grid. Leadership routinely speaks of “living pure, clean and holy lives”, while emphasizing that they only preach “things that line up with Scripture.” Unlike their experience in previous churches, GM members claim they now have power to “be holy – to live according to the way the Word of God says we should”.⁶⁰ Drawing on biblical verses like Philippians 4:13, they boldly declare that “they can do all things through Christ who gives them strength”. Their highly individualized message of personal holiness certainly seems to benefit many GM members, but in some respects it does appear to leave broader socio-political issues untouched.⁶¹

⁵⁸ On the BLM prosperity message, see Born 2007:52.

⁵⁹ GM, Gaborone (19 June 2005). “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Josh. 1:8, NIV). “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Lu. 6:38, NIV).

⁶⁰ Quotations taken from Personal Interviews with D.D. Monnakgosi (7 May 2002), A. Andreck (17 June 2005) and O. Moseki (10 June 2005).

⁶¹ See Masenya (2005:43-44) for his conclusion that African-South African Pentecostal churches have focused on deliverance from personal sin, while neglecting to address the larger issue of structural and societal evil. Kalu (2009:84) offers a contradictory conclusion: “The critics do not adequately distinguish between covert and overt political engagements. Nor do they recognize that intercession could serve as political practice that enables communities to imagine a counter political culture that fights against the debilitating force of ethnicity and seeks the welfare of the nation, the continent, and the entire black race”.

The strong focus on a lifestyle based on holiness and purity promulgated by GM has led to accusations of an unbending legalism (Kelebonye 1999). Although their moralism might appear similar to the HC emphasis on Mosaic law, this is not really the case with GM. Viewing the Old Testament through a New Testament lens in a “Jesus-centric manner”, they look for both continuity and discontinuity in biblical proscriptions. For example, if a Mosaic command is repeated in the New Testament, then it must be obeyed. If not, it can be disregarded. Pastor D. Mokhokhele used the modern interest in fashionable clothing as an illustration. With some rather creative exegesis, he cited Genesis 35:2, and two additional passages in Exodus, as commands against wearing special clothing. He then provided I Timothy 2:8-10 and I Peter 3:1-7 as two New Testament texts forbidding ostentatious adornment. Based on these passages he argued that Christians should not follow the latest trends in apparel and hairstyles.⁶²

4.4.3.4 Dramatization Of The Text

While the commands and promises of Scripture are highly important, biblical narratives also provide GM preachers with a wealth of homiletic resources. No longer is the listener just an observer of events that happened in the distant past but now they are encouraged to become active participants in the biblical story.⁶³ This is why the new birth experience, along with the baptism and filling of the Holy Spirit are so critical. GM members firmly believe that they are reliving the experience of the New Testament disciples of Jesus, especially as recorded in on the book of Acts.⁶⁴ Douglas Petersen’s (1998:23) observation for Pentecostals in general also holds true for GM: “Pentecostals

⁶² Personal Interview (18 February 2002). The GM fixation with modest dress is interesting considering the way that both men and women at the church wear attractive modern clothing well and keep themselves very well-groomed.

⁶³ This same dynamic is at work in BLM (21 April 2002). For example, the account of Peter’s remarkable deliverance from prison by means of the angel of the Lord (Acts 12:6-11) was retold in a way that BLM members were to recast themselves as Peter and the prison as financial or physical difficulties. But the angel of the Lord who delivered Peter is the same angel who is going to empower the believer today.

⁶⁴ Unlike most NPCs, GM does not invoke the Trinitarian formula of Father, Son and Holy Spirit when performing water baptism, but instead baptizes in the name of Jesus in imitation of the model found in Acts (2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5).

contend that the biblical text cannot be fully understood apart from personally experiencing the events that the Bible describes". If one has faith, the stories from God's Word can radically alter the present and future. It speaks to the issues of each individual, bringing the Bible to life for a new context and a new generation.

In concert with many other NPCs, church members believe that if they act as their biblical heroes did in the past, God will intervene on their behalf in the present and future (Gifford 2005:86). The Bible provides the images and stories that inspire and inform the lives of GM members. "Believers often come to see themselves as re-invoking characters in a biblical drama whose episodes can be replayed again and again throughout history, as tokens of an original type" (Coleman 2000:125). This kind of explicit appeal to biblical figures is common in GM preaching. "God has saved the lives of his saints – Daniel, David, Paul and Peter. God is saying I will do the same for you. I will close the lion's mouth. I will give you supernatural power to rip apart lions and bears. I will send my angel to free you from any form of imprisonment".⁶⁵ For GM members the Word of God is alive and powerful, and malleable enough to fit their own life circumstances.

4.4.3.5 Spiritual Experience And The Biblical Text

The fundamental importance of spiritual experience in the GM hermeneutical task has been repeatedly mentioned in this discussion. This naturally raises the question as to which is more important: text or spiritual revelation through experience? What does it mean when a GM leader declares that "the truth that comes from the Word of God must come from God himself"?⁶⁶ In order to be taken seriously, GM preachers need to deliver fresh testimonies of what God has been doing in their lives on a regular basis. Not content with past victories, church members want to know what God has done for them lately. Concerned about the drift away from a dependence upon the

⁶⁵ GM, Gaborone (11 July 2007).

⁶⁶ A. Andreck, Personal Interview (17 June 2005).

biblical text, South African Pentecostal pastor and scholar, Peter Watt (2006:391) has suggested “that some Pentecostals and their descendents have become uncritical ‘collectors of experiences’”. Although this may well be true to a certain extent within GM, it is quite likely they would take serious issue with this assessment due to their repeated references to the Bible.

The question regarding the priority of biblical text or spiritual experience is illustrated well by Apostle Monnakgosi’s vision recounted earlier (see 2.4.3).⁶⁷ While fasting and praying, he claims that God audibly instructed him to “destroy ignorance in the land”. When Monnakgosi asked how he should do so, God said, “I have given you a syringe and you are to inject people with it. From now on, listen carefully to the words that come from your mouth”. Monnakgosi professed that he knew God was referring to the Bible as various passages mentioning the Word of God came to mind, such as Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12, and John 6:68. It was clear to him that he was “to inject the Word of God into people’s lives”. In this case, his spiritual experience established the importance of Scripture, while the references to the Word of God validated his vision (and his authority to interpret the biblical text).⁶⁸

Spiritual experience also determines whose interpretations of Scripture are deemed authoritative. Only those who have been “born again” and “baptized in the Spirit” will find their way to the pulpit: “We know that someone has the Spirit if they speak in tongues and display the fruit of the Spirit”.⁶⁹ At the same time, GM boldly censures those who do not follow the established norms because they know that “not every power is of God – not everything that glitters is gold. False prophets will come”.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Personal Interview (6 July 2005).

⁶⁸ Gina Buijs (1995:93), in a discussion regarding the role of a charismatic leader, makes an important point concerning the use of familiar traditions and symbols such as the Bible: “Yet a charismatic leader should also appeal to tradition, for only by doing so can he establish communication with his followers. Traditional concepts, symbols and images, even if reinterpreted, are used to facilitate the acceptance of the radically new”.

⁶⁹ O. Moseki, Personal Interview (10 June 2005).

⁷⁰ D.D. Monnakgosi, Personal Interview (7 May 2002).

To defeat these false prophets GM appeals to Scripture, but even more telling, they expect that the power of God will always conquer the power of Satan. Confrontations with those claiming spiritual power such as traditional doctors or ASC prophets are welcomed because GM followers believe they will emerge victorious.

This emphasis on powerful encounters with God does not negate the need to strive for moral rectitude in all areas of life, although one wonders if the need to display evidence of a successful life is not just as important. All preachers at GM are expected to dress well, speak confidently, and those whom I met had good jobs, fine homes, and many owned their own vehicles. Leaders are expected to set an example in lifestyle, as well as to project an image of calm assurance that God is working powerfully in their lives.⁷¹ Here again, the qualifications to preach are based less on a knowledge of the Word of God, and more on evidence that one has appropriated the ideology espoused by GM.

4.4.4 Summary

For GM members the life-altering experiences of being “born again” and baptized in the Holy Spirit have become paradigmatic in their approach to Scripture. While the Bible clearly functions as an authority for doctrine and morality, it is also clear that their fixation with spiritual power leads them to interpret Scripture through a grid that must promote success, prosperity and victory in all areas of life. Ogbu Kalu (1998:4) is surely correct when he claims that the Bible “provides the materials out of which an alternatively construed world can be properly imagined”. Biblical promises, commands, and especially narratives can all be creatively employed in an effort to produce an ideology powerful enough to enable GM members to negotiate the rather dangerous terrain created by the interface between modernity and the spiritual forces still present within Setswana cosmology.

⁷¹ D.D. Monnakgosi, Personal Interview (7 May 2002). “When people see you are spiritually protected, then they have confidence you can help them”. The role of charismatic leadership within NPCs has been highlighted by many scholars (De Haes 1992:84; Buijs 1995:92-93; Ojo 1995:115; Coleman 2000:121,135).

The linkage between preacher and the Word of God is especially pronounced at GM. Constantly referring to Scripture verses, while dramatically recounting personal illustrations of God's power at work, tends to blur the lines between the voice of the preacher and the authoritative voice of God. The congregation is drawn into the drama, and invited to "eat the Word", to ingest the inherent power present in the promises of God, and to enter into biblical narratives in a quest to "be clothed with power from on high" (Lk. 24:49). But the Word is not just internalized; believers must also verbally proclaim positive confessions of faith, without doubting, in order to gain the full benefit of the Word of God. This faith-based hermeneutic of empowerment is foundational for all biblical interpretation at GM.

4.5 Conclusion

In both types of churches, one can find a similar dynamic at work in their approach to the Bible. They proudly declare that they submit to the authority of the Word of God; in a sense, the Bible owns and controls them. However, due to their specific context and concerns, they also exert their influence on the Bible, and have taken possession of the Word of God in order to enhance their own self-identity and ideology. Thus, the Bible is both the inspiration for novel approaches to life and culture, as well as the authoritative validation of previously held convictions and practices. One cannot look for standard interpretive strategies but rather focus on the creative and innovative interpretations that accord with the widely held values and beliefs of the specific churches. The manner in which the Bible is employed by both groups complies with Foucault's observation that the production of truth is a primary activity of those exercising power.

In examining how HC members read the Bible, my research revealed that they view it through a hermeneutical lens that promotes a community-based holistic "life-affirming and healing emphasis" that accords well with traditional Setswana values. For many HC members the Bible is primarily a resource that helps them survive in a difficult context. The powerful Spirit of God communicates healing and comfort to them through

the biblical narrative. On the other hand, GM members approach the Bible with a hermeneutic of empowerment that promises power, victory and success in temporal affairs (finances, health) as well as moral concerns (upright living). For them, it is not enough to survive. They must thrive in their modern, urban, globally-impacted context. Both groups make appeal to the Spirit as the one who inspires, guides and directs them, but, based on their constant appeals to experience, it is difficult to discern the voice of God from that of the preacher or prophet.

Although the results are significantly different for these two types of churches, the triad of Spirit, Word and experience enables them to construct counter-ideologies that are both drawn from, and confirmed by, the Bible. Accessing the spiritual power of God as promised in the Word, they resist, adapt to, create their own space and construct their own identity (ideology) in opposition to other powerful ideologies surrounding them. In this conversation, “the discourse of power”, they are exercising their agentive power in an effort to take hold of the non-agentive spiritual power mediated to them through Scripture.⁷² What will become increasingly clear in the following chapters is that even though they claim their ideologies are biblically-based, they nevertheless come to very different conclusions with regard to healing and deliverance, as well as in their understanding of culture and covenants. Claiming the guidance of the Spirit, they selectively employ signs and technologies from the two most powerful ideologies in their context, the Setswana and Western worlds, and then provide Scriptural justification for their choices, in an effort to supply their followers with an ideology of power.

⁷² Coleman (2000:127) has described this process beautifully: “The logic of this is that the mind and body of the believer are to be colonized by the transcendent world of the Spirit, with sacred language as the mediating vehicle between the two”.

CHAPTER FIVE

HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

5.1 Introduction

To a large degree, 19th and 20th century foreign missionaries in Africa tended to detach healing and prophecy from the spiritual mission of the church, leading to the secularization of medical treatment (Hastings 1994:530). Physical and mental healthcare was taken care of by clinics and hospitals, using techniques of Western medicine that had no clear connection with the Bible. When a patient met with a doctor or nurse, the visit was usually very short and the experts were primarily concerned with the physical symptoms of disease. In sharp contrast, the ASCs have made healing and prophecy central to all that they do. S.S. Maimela (1985:71) observed that the greatest attraction of ASCs “is their open invitation to Africans to bring their fears and anxieties about witches, sorcerers, bad luck, poverty, illness and all kinds of misfortune to the church leadership”. They believe that Christian compassion requires the church to give attention to all who are suffering, no matter what their ailment, and to approach life holistically as they integrate the spiritual and material spheres (Oosthuizen 1997:10; Anderson 2000c:241; Adamo 2001:85-86).

The desire to improve the lives of their followers is also high on the agenda of NPCs, who believe evil forces often hold their members back from making successful progress in life. Similar to Maimela’s assertion above regarding ASCs, Ogbu Kalu (2003b:95) suggests that “Pentecostals offer an exit or resolution to the problems of bondage to witchcraft, ancestral spirits and curses inherited through the generations. God’s power, mediated through the name and blood of Jesus, liberates the afflicted and brings salvation”. In both types of churches, they believe the Spirit of God plays a crucial role as the one empowering them for this vital ministry of restoring life.

One might ask then, what is the point of another discussion of this topic? In this chapter, my purpose is to focus more specifically on the critical similarities and differences between the two groups in terms of their creation of specific ideologies of power in relation to disease and deliverance. As substantial differences emerge in their approaches to disease, the fallacy of simply conflating the two groups will become increasingly apparent. In Chapter Three (see 3.2), I referred to Chidester's discussion regarding the "battleground of symbols" where he argues that specific groups invent, appropriate, re-interpret and reject symbols in an effort to assert their self-identity. In this chapter, I will describe how the HC has drawn heavily upon Setswana symbols and ritual in order to provide healing power for their members. But one should not naively assume that they have simply donned a Setswana identity, as their rigorous effort to provide biblical justification for every aspect of their healing rituals makes clear. In an effort to assert their independence from both Setswana and Western ideologies, they look to the Spirit to guide them on a path that allows them to pick and choose which symbols and rituals will enable them to experience life in the present.

In some ways, the GM approach to signs and symbols is similar to that of HC. The primary difference is that they have chosen to reject almost all Setswana symbolic forms and rituals in favour of Western technologies and forms of worship. That said, they too would strongly argue that all they do is based on a biblical foundation. A critical difference is found in their dualistic two kingdom theology which pictures an ongoing cosmic battle between the forces of God and the forces of Satan where true followers of God always emerge victorious. This conscious employ of agentive power in the production of a theological construct colours their view of disease and spiritual deliverance in a most distinct manner.

On account of the importance of ritual and symbol in the healing and deliverance ministries described in this chapter, I will begin with a brief discussion of these terms, noting especially their capacity to form identity, adapt to changing contexts, and help form community. Later on I will illustrate the efforts of the HC and GM to retain, transform and reject significant aspects of the Setswana ideology concerning disease in their own

approaches to the struggles of their members. Therefore, it seems important to provide at least a cursory overview of the Setswana framework. The bulk of the chapter contains extensive description of the practices and beliefs of the two groups with regard to disease and life difficulties, noting the significant differences created by their widely differing views of God, disease, evil spirits and the role of physical objects as symbols. This analysis is concerned with highlighting the conscious use of tactics as a form of “coded resistance”.

5.2 Understanding Ritual, Symbol And Magic

5.2.1 Ritual And Symbol

The importance of ritual and symbol in the study of religion and culture has been well documented and discussed. My purpose here is simply to define the terms and explain their relevance for the subject of this chapter: healing and deliverance. Building on the ideas of Arnold van Gennep (1960), Victor Turner (1977:183) defined ritual as “a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actor’s goals or interests”. These “gestures, words and objects” are symbols, containing meaningful knowledge of the cherished values of a community (V. Turner 1968:2). As these symbols are employed in ritual performance, transformative power is released to work in the lives of the people involved. Therefore one cannot truly understand the power of rituals without becoming an active participant.¹

Symbols are distinct from signs in that signs function as indicators or pointers while symbols represent something else either by association, resemblance or convention. According to Turner (1968:1-2), a symbol functions as a “storage unit” filled with crucial information concerning community social and religious values. But religious symbols not only contain data, they also have the power (because they represent the divine presence and activity) to transform the lives, attitudes and behaviour of a community. “A symbol not only conveys the presence of a reality; it also establishes

¹ For a much fuller discussion of Victor Turner’s views regarding ritual and symbol, see Deflem (1991:1-25) and Karecki (1997b:601-603).

and strengthens the relation to this reality which may be awe, admiration, gratitude, or community” (Becken 1992:186). Symbols can impart vision and hope, as well as connect a community to a shared past.

Many have noted the close relationship between ritual, symbol and community building. Rituals and symbols are most powerful when the participants share a common worldview or ideology, including a community history and values (Bate 1995:109). In fact, Turner (1967:94) suggested that rituals, especially rites of passage, create and enhance community bonds (what he called *communitas*). This takes place in a threefold progression of stages: (1) separation from an earlier existence; (2) liminality, an ambiguous state; and (3) reaggregation, when the ritual subject enters a new state of being. During the liminal phase, when the subject is “betwixt and between” the old and the new; he or she is able “to experience themselves and reality from a new point of view” (Karecki 1997a:172). As they emerge from the liminal state, bonds have formed with those who have participated in the ritual. The importance for the community cannot be overstated as the ritual both reinforces the beliefs and values of older members, as well as incorporates new individuals.

One aspect of Turner's theorizing that has been critiqued is his argument that the primary purpose of ritual is to preserve community values and maintain the status quo. This view has been challenged by those who argue that symbol and ritual are constantly evolving, especially as cultures come into contact with one another. This perspective highlights the potential for ritual and symbol to point backward and forward at the same time, and provide a link between cultures as it incorporates new forms and meaning. Jean and John Comaroff (1993:xxix) express this view succinctly as follows:

[P]lace the long, persistent tradition that sees ritual as conservative and conservationist, as a (indeed, *the*) prime mechanism of social reproduction, cultural continuity, and political authority, we presume differently: that it may as well be, and frequently is, a site and a means of experimental practice, of subversive poetics, of creative tension and transformative action; that, under its authorship and authority, individual and collective aspirations weave a thread of imaginative possibilities from which may emerge, wittingly or not, new signs and meanings, conventions and intentions.

Here ritual is not set in stone but open to innovation, while at the same time allowing the participants to experience a certain level of security as they deal with words, gestures and symbols that are familiar from their past. In this way creative rituals both legitimize their cultural traditions while opening them up to new ways of approaching the world.

An additional factor to take into consideration is the relationship among ritual, symbol and discourse. Madge Karecki (1997b:602) notes that excessive verbalization, didactic explanation and moralizing “hinder the power of ritual from being unleashed”. There is truth in the old saying: “A picture is worth a thousand words”. However it should be recognized that words also function as signs and symbols, pointing beyond themselves. Here is where the NPC use of stock phrases such as “the name of Jesus”, “the blood of Jesus” and the “fire of God” needs careful exploration. These terms clearly evoke and represent large fields of meaning that have power to create confidence and security in those worshipping. While ASCs tend to gravitate towards physical symbols, NPCs are drawn to verbal symbols, including the use of *glossalalia*.

When studying ritual and symbol, it is critical not to fall into the trap of “symbolic reductionism”, the tendency of Western scholars to create a dichotomy between the spiritual and the material that, in effect, robs symbols of their power to impact the unconscious. Robert Bellah (1970:93) espouses ‘symbolic realism’: “Here reality is seen to reside not just in the object but in the subject and particularly in the relation between subject and object”. To understand a ritual or symbol, one cannot extract it from its context and treat it as a scientific object of interest. Part of the power of symbols is that they are multivalent; therefore, to understand its significance, a symbol needs to be studied in context and the observer must have a working knowledge of this context (V. Turner 1967:50-52; Van Niekerk 1986:36). It is at the point of interpreting ritual and symbol within the specific context that I question Anderson’s attempt to separate *form* and *meaning*. In his discussion (2000c:300-301) of ASC healing rituals and symbols he argues that one must “distinguish between the *form* of the healing practices, which might indeed resemble the traditional diviner’s methods, and their *content*, which is often diametrically the opposite of these practices”.

This distinction between form and meaning is often extremely difficult to maintain as even Anderson admits. Furthermore, it should be recognized that the quest to separate form and meaning is one of the characteristics of modernity, and not adhered to in many societies (Hiebert 1989:107-116).² Based on a more holistic understanding of symbol and ritual, it is likely that the linkage between form and meaning is more tightly linked for participants than the observer. This process of interpretation contains great ambiguity and not a little mystery as even some participants in a ritual may view it quite differently from others (see M West 1975:188). It is only as one carefully studies the context and listens to those involved that one can begin to understand what the participants themselves believe is taking place.

5.2.2 Magic And The Symbolic

Closely related to the discussion above regarding the difficulty of interpreting rituals and symbols is the issue of magic. ASCs are sometimes accused of treating certain objects as though they have “magical power”, and of placing their faith in healing rituals and objects instead of trusting God to meet their needs. With regard to magic, B.A. Pauw (1960:147) has provided a helpful definition, suggesting that it seeks to use, manipulate or control unseen powers, personal or impersonal. A ritual becomes magical when participants believe there is a direct cause-and-effect relationship. The ritual compels the unseen powers to respond according to a desired outcome. “Magic is formulaic and mechanistic” (Hiebert et al. 1999:378). On the other hand, a ritual is non-magical if the participants put themselves at the disposal of the spiritual powers, submitting to their decision-making authority (also Pretorius 2004:156-157).

Pauw and others fully understand that in practice these distinctions are very difficult to maintain. For example, Christians all around the world frequently ascribe magical efficacy to prayer, baptism and Holy Communion (Nussbaum 1985:112;

² Based on the work of Mary Douglas (1973), Paul Hiebert (1989:107) has noted the tight linkage between form and meaning in tribal and peasant societies. “To say a word of curse is indeed to curse. To perform the rain dance is not a way of asking the gods to send rain; it is to create rain. The rituals are thought to cause things to happen. Symbols, in fact, are seen as performative”.

Pretorius 2004:156-157). The same is true of the ASC penchant for ritual and symbol. The NPC reliance upon verbal symbols such as “the name of Jesus”, “the blood of Jesus” and the “fire of God” may also veer into the magical. As will be described below, many members of both types of churches argue that it is not the symbol which gives life, but faith in the God who supplied the symbol. While it may look like “magic” to outside observers, to those within the church, these are just tools to help those struggling to believe. This discussion of ritual, symbol and magic once again draws attention to the importance of understanding the total context of the churches under study. These churches have created, appropriated and reinterpreted numerous rituals and symbols in an effort to enable their members to connect with the Spirit, as well as with one another. Many of these rituals are designed to help the participants gain a sense of their familiar world, as well as introduce them to something new and powerful. Whether or not church members understand these experiences in a magical manner is difficult to ascertain, but I will argue that they do believe these rituals and symbols provide them with access to power.

5.3 Setswana View Of Disease And Its Treatment

The ASC proclivity for appropriating African symbols for use in their healing rituals has quite naturally attracted considerable attention. Furthermore, it has been argued that they not only employ these symbols, but that their framework for understanding disease flows from a “traditional” African worldview (e.g., Kealotswe 2001:224). As I have strated previously (see 2.3.1), it is impossible to re-create the Setswana worldview as though it existed in a vacuum, for it was only through contact with Western culture and Christianity that it was articulated or reified. Nevertheless it is still important to at least trace the general contours of how sickness and health have been understood in Botswana. This is especially important considering that beliefs concerning traditional medicine are still held strongly throughout much of the country (Amanze 2002:90-91).

5.3.1 The Value Of Social Harmony

Considerably broader than the Western concept of illness, which focuses primarily on its bio-physical nature and the individual patient, the Setswana word for disease, *bolwetse*, is defined in its social context. While it certainly may refer to an individual's physical illness, any difficulty, problem or misfortune affecting a person or their family can be considered *bolwetse*. It is probably more accurate to use the term, dis-ease, because *bolwetse* is linked to any breakdown in the harmony of relationships that comprise their world (Setiloane 1976:44; Ntloedibe 2001:499-500). This conceptual framework for disease demands that one not only treat the symptoms of an illness, for the cause or source of disease must also be identified in order to affect a cure (Staugard 1985:67).

To gain a better understanding of the broad framework of health and disease, one needs to begin with a description of the hierarchical order of Setswana life. Mogapi (1985:91-92) has diagrammed this hierarchy as follows:

Modimo (God)
Badimo ba morafe (Tribal ancestors)
Dikgosi tse di tlhokafetseng (Chiefs who have died)
Kgosi ya motlha oo (Present Chief)
Borremogolo ba ba tlhokafetseng (Male family elders who have died)
Borremogolo ba ba tshelang (Male family elders)
Batsadi ba me (My parents)³

Figure 3: Hierarchical Order

A person's position in society was largely based on three factors: sex, age and lineage. Men were believed to be superior to women, older members of the same sex were one's superiors while younger members were subordinates and patrilineal descent (agnation) ordered rank within the tribal hierarchy (Schapera 1955:28-32; Alverson 1978:12; J & J Comaroff 1991:156).

³ Translations are my own.

In this arrangement, it is understood that God, *Modimo*, cannot be approached directly but only through the ancestors, the *badimo*. The *badimo* watch over the living, and bless good behaviour as well as punish transgressions of tribal custom. They act as a conservative force, maintaining social and moral coherence among the Batswana. A primary way of showing their displeasure is to afflict the offending person or their family with *bolwetse*. The Setswana concept of personhood focuses on social bonds; therefore it is firmly believed that others, especially those within close proximity, can either positively or negatively effect the state of one's being (J Comaroff 1985:128).⁴ At birth all persons have been granted a spirit of life or power for life (*moya*). The general health, wealth and wellbeing of an individual (and his/her family) are prime indicators of a strong or weak *moya*. When a person's *moya* is out of balance or adversely affected by some other force, he or she is in danger of experiencing *bolwetse*, disease, the disruption of the moral order.

5.3.2 The Causes For Disease

Within this framework, disease is believed to have three primary causes: witchcraft or sorcery (*boloi*), ancestral disapproval (*dikgaba*) and acts of God (*ditiro tsa Modimo*).⁵ In addition, undomesticated spirits, the spirits of those who died unnaturally or were improperly buried, can also bring illness and destruction if disturbed (J & J Comaroff 1993:155-56). Witchcraft (*boloi*) is intimately concerned with social relationships and the attempt to overpower another either actively by introducing poisons (*sejeso* and *ditlhare*) into an intended victim's food, or passively by means of malevolent feelings of jealousy, hatred or anger (Schapera 1970:110-113).⁶ One needs

⁴ The well known proverb is applicable here: "A person is a person through/by means of people" (*Motho ke motho ka batho*).

⁵ For additional etiological detail, see Staugard 1985:68-72; Booyens 1986:117-118; and Merriweather 1992:63-68.

⁶ There is a strong belief that people can harm each other simply through malicious thoughts and intentions. The Batswana say, "the heart is a sorcerer" (*pelo ke molo*). When someone has wronged another person, bitterness and anger in the offended party's heart can boil over and send a curse to the offender, weakening their *moya*. The resulting affliction can be serious and debilitating.

to fortify oneself continually to ward off these kinds of attacks. When individuals or families within the community prosper exceedingly, or else suffer unexplainably, accusations of sorcery are likely to follow. The health and harmony of society is dependent upon the maintenance of a proper balance of wealth among all members of the community (Ntloedibe 2001:501).

The second category of disease deals with issues arising from one's relation to the ancestral spirits. As custodians of Setswana culture, the ancestors ensure that their kin observe traditional taboos (*meila*) and customs (*mekgwa*). At times these diseases may manifest themselves as mental illness. One specific form of this disease is *kgaba*. When a younger person does not properly fulfill their responsibilities to respect and take care of an older relative, they may incur the wrath of the ancestors. The person who has *kgaba* may or may not become physically ill but often their children may suffer, even die, and crop and economic performance will suffer.⁷ Another affliction related to the ancestors is that of "spiritual disease" (*bolwetsi jwa semoya*); a condition most often related to a 'call' experience. Through dreams and visions, the ancestors may indicate their desire that a person engage in a healing ministry, and if the person refuses, they may choose to punish them with illness. This sickness cannot be treated by Western trained doctors; in fact, they may not even be able to detect anything physically wrong. However the one afflicted will experience various symptoms, including lack of strength, headaches and a very high body temperature. Unless the person relents and accepts the call on their life, there is no way they can experience harmony within their horizontal or vertical relationships (Staugard 1985:57; Amanze 2002:105).

The final category is that of diseases from God (*malwetsi a Modimo*). This category basically refers to natural diseases which have no underlying pathological cause. One example is the common cold (*mhikela*). There is an understanding that people may now become ill due to the change in seasons or simply for no particular reason. Sickness and death among the elderly is viewed in this manner; it is the will of

⁷ See Schapera 1938:175-177 for a full description, albeit in Setswana. Setiloane also provides a helpful description (1976:48-50).

God (*go rata ga Modimo*). On occasion though, severe community disasters such as drought and epidemic outbreaks of disease were also attributed to God (J & J Comaroff 1991:155).

5.3.3 The Role Of The Traditional Healer

In an effort to overcome the affects of disease, Batswana relied upon their understanding of the created order and their traditional healers (*dingaka*). Traditional doctors were called and empowered by the ancestors to explain the cause of disease, give advice, provide treatment and supply preventive and protective measures by means of their rites and medicines (Schapera 1953:63-65). As those who seek to restore health and social harmony, they are often called to take on the roles of “religious consultant, a legal and political advisor, a police detective, a marriage counselor and a social worker” (Staugard 1985:12). Their specialized knowledge of medicines (*dithare*), revealed to them by God and/or the ancestors, empowered them to heal, fortify against attack and encourage productivity (J & J Comaroff 1991:157-158).

Traditional healers are renowned for their ability to uncover the underlying cause of disease by means of their divining-bones (*ditaola*), originally a set of four bones with specific names and functions kept in a small bag.⁸ A number of other bones (may actually consist of shells, glass beads or pieces of horn) have been added through contact with foreign peoples. The process usually follows a set pattern. Meeting together with the patient (*molwetse*) and their relatives, the doctor “throws the bones” after both patient and healer have blown on them. This is done repeatedly, with the traditional healer interpreting the position of the bones while possibly talking to them in a special language. Between “throws”, there is consultation regarding possible interpretations of the bones’ position on the ground, and the patient’s own thoughts and feelings about their condition. While the *ngaka* guides the process, all members present (including the ancestors) are involved in the process. In this manner it is

⁸ Much has been written on the topic of traditional divination. For example, see Schapera 1953:64; Campbell 1968:9-13; Staugard 1985:74-81; J & J Comaroff 1991:157; and Amanze 2002:102-112.

believed the bones can reveal the etiology of the disease, its pathogenesis, treatment and even the prognosis (Staugard 1985:79).

In the discussion to follow, the importance of understanding the Setswana view of health and disease becomes readily apparent. This is for two reasons. First, in the HC approach to healing, the research data reveals that they accept much of the basic framework discussed above, with some important modifications. Second, within the GM approach to deliverance and disease, major areas of discontinuity with the Setswana ideology are extremely evident. This disagreement over the Setswana view of disease, and how disease should be treated, provides one of the clearest areas of difference between these two types of churches.

5.4 Hermon Church And Healing

Sentswela Madimabe, the Archbishop's second wife, began attending the HC in 1968 and says that many church members first came because they sought healing and assistance with their troubles. When questioned about her experience, she says simply: "When I am sick, I go to the church and when I return to my yard, I am well. I believe God has healed me".⁹ The linkage between the power of the Spirit and healing for all manner of ailments is explicit in the HC statement of faith: "The Holy Spirit heals people and helps them solve their problems" (in Amanze 1994:132). The Questionnaire results (#26) confirm this belief as 88% of the respondents professed to have received some form of healing in their church. The Spirit is believed to empower, protect, deliver, purify, reconcile and heal anyone seeking help. While the HC calls on the Spirit for power, they look to Jesus as the model for their healing ministry, and believe that all Christians should follow his example. Archbishop Madimabe points to Mark 2:1-12 and John 5:1-9 as his key Scripture passages in this regard, as both passages tell of Jesus' healing power and the need for faith. His assistant, Isaac Tsholofelo agrees, claiming that "all that is needed is

⁹ Personal Interview (23 September 2003).

Jesus". Jesus came to save and bring life to human beings through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

5.4.1 A Healing Event¹¹

Various descriptions of ASC healing rituals are provided in the literature; therefore I will keep the following description relatively brief.¹² The climax of nearly every HC service is the time of song, dance and prayer that takes place following the preaching and taking of the offering. In the HC, this part of the service commences when the leaders begin to sing, get up from where they are seated and move towards the middle of the church and start to shuffle-dance in a circle (*go chaterese*).¹³ On this occasion, the first chorus was a simple line sung repeatedly (perhaps 40 times): "*Ntate wee, Jehofa, re go tshepile* (Our Father, Jehovah, we trust you). Almost immediately, all the children were led into the circle, where they kneeled before the elders who laid hands on them as they prayed. As vulnerable members of the group, prayers for the children naturally focus on protection from any kind of attack and blessing for their studies.

At the outset, those dancing moved rather slowly but eventually the pace picked up considerably, while those in the line spun themselves continuously, and occasionally the whole group reversed direction. The dancing was accompanied by energetic drumming, bell ringing, hand-clapping and someone rhythmically blowing a whistle. One young woman, beating a smaller drum attached to her neck with a strap, joined in

¹⁰ Personal Interviews (22 September 2003 and 14 November 2003).

¹¹ The healing event described took place at HC headquarters in Sefophe (21 September 2003).

¹² For a number of examples, see M. West 1975:27-37; Lagerwerf 1984:58-75; and Bate 1995:35-42.

¹³ Nussbaum (1985:294) has called this the "wheel dance". Unfortunately this term, *go chaterese*, has yet to find its way into Setswana dictionaries. Its origins (as well as its proper spelling) are difficult to ascertain, although Pauw (1960:202) assumed it was a mispronunciation of the military term, "dress", referring to proper martial formation. It would certainly be interesting if this was the case, as it would provide another excellent example of ASCs subverting a symbol of western power, and reinventing it as a means of empowerment and healing within their own peaceful context.

the dance without losing a beat. Even older men and women began to dance energetically. As the pace quickened, people began to show signs of being caught up in the Spirit (*go tshwerwe ke Moya*). Some began to stagger, the limbs of others jerked in abnormal ways, one fell down and various members cried or yelled out short bursts of unintelligible language. Abruptly, everyone dropped to their knees and audibly prayed, many at a high volume.

The time of prayer lasted for approximately 5 minutes and then the congregation was back on their feet, singing and dancing again. This time the chorus was one of their favorites, “The Chariot of Elijah” (*Koloi ya Elija*).¹⁴ When sung during the circle dance, many of those participating like to mimic the actions of someone riding a horse and chariot – it is quite riveting to observe. Various participants continued to display behaviours believed to be instigated by the Spirit, such as staggering and falling. While the congregation danced, some people moved into the center of the circle, and knelt for prayer. Church leaders laid their hands and/or staffs on them and prayed in loud voices. One of the pastors laid his stole on their heads when praying. At some point the congregation began to sing a new chorus drawn from Mark 10:48 that focuses on the healing power of Jesus: “Jesus, Son of David, Have mercy on me” (*Jesu, Morwa Dafite, nkutlwelela botlhoko*). After an extended period of prayer, they were helped up and left the circle.

By this time, this portion of the service had already lasted 30-40 minutes. Another 10 minutes were spent singing the chorus “God is love, He is full of glory” (*Modimo o lorato, o lorato; o tletse kgalalelo, kgalalelo*). When the chorus shifted to another HC favorite, “I am here, I have arrived” (*Ke na yo, ke fitlhile*), a young man entered the circle and knelt. I was not able to ascertain the exact nature of his affliction but it was clear he was in some pain. The Vice-Bishop, a recognized prophet in the church, entered the circle and began praying for him loudly. After a few minutes, he held up his staff and all activity ceased. He announced to the congregation that he had

¹⁴ See below (5.4.2.4) for further discussion of this chorus.

seen a “white lamb on an altar” (*kwanyana e tshweu mo sebesong*). He believed that the young man needed to offer a white lamb as a sacrifice in order to find relief from his problem.

The congregation began to sing the same chorus and two women entered the circle and rubbed their staffs over the young man’s back and arms while praying loudly for him. Then another prophet, this time a younger woman, called the church to attention after nearly falling under the power of the Spirit. She spoke quickly in a somewhat “jerky” manner, and claimed the young man would also need to go to the dam to undergo a ritual purification bath. Following her pronouncement, more people prayed for the young man, and then he was led away to meet with other members of the church who performed other healing rituals. Shortly thereafter, the service was concluded with a prayer of blessing over the congregation by the Archbishop.

There are, of course, numerous elements of this ritual that require unpacking, but I will focus on five at this juncture: the “wheel dance”, coming under the influence of the Spirit, prayer and fasting, the importance of certain songs, and the role of angels. Other elements, including the use of various media when praying, prophecy and the significance of sacrifice will be discussed later.

5.4.2 Accessing Spiritual Power Through Ritual

5.4.2.1 The “Wheel Dance”

When I asked various church members the reason for their dancing (*go chaterese*), many pointed to a connection with the Spirit. Zipporah Madimabe answered directly: “We want the Spirit to enter us” (*Re batla gore Moya a tsene mo go rona*).¹⁵ Some claimed that prayers are heard more quickly when dancing. The participants have real power to pray because they focus on the dance and are not distracted by what is happening around them. During one session of dancing, church members were instructed to kneel and pray if they felt a “cool breeze” (*phefo e e siameng*). This allows

¹⁵ Personal Interview (3 July 2005).

the Spirit to work in them, and keeps them from being influenced by other spirits.¹⁶ Another of the Archbishop's daughters, Odirile Madimabe suggested that in these difficult days (referring to the AIDS pandemic and drought occurring in the region), it is especially important to dance. "We need to pray and praise God because we need the Spirit in order to live well in the land".¹⁷

The importance of the "wheel dance" for the HC cannot be overestimated as it features in almost every gathering, whether the Sunday service, a midweek prayer gathering or an all-night festival. In the midst of their difficult lives, they clearly experience this dance as a life-giving and spiritually empowering activity. The corporate nature of this ritual should not be overlooked. The ritual process described by Victor Turner of separation, liminality and reaggregation is clearly in evidence when church members leave the dance to enter the circle, receive prayer and prophecy while kneeling, and then re-enter the dance. While in the center of the sacred circle, the potential for revelation, renewal and transformation is heightened as the person seeking help enters a world where the Spirit reigns supreme, and all things are possible. When they re-enter the communal dance, there is a sense of both hope and security for they have connected with both the divine as well the church community.

5.4.2.2 Connecting With The Spirit

From the discussion above, one can surmise that the purpose of the "wheel dance" is to help HC members experience the Spirit in a profound manner. In this regard, the experience of "being seized by the Spirit" (*go tshwerwe ke Moya*) comes to the fore. While almost all HC Questionnaire respondents (96%) claimed to have been baptized in the Spirit (#19), a little less than half (44%) had undergone this type of spiritual possession (#23). During this experience, God may reveal things to them such

¹⁶ HC, Sefophe (1 November 2003).

¹⁷ Personal Interview (3 July 2005). I was also told that the shadows of those encircling the person kneeling in the center of the circle provide spiritual power for healing. Acts 5:15-16 was provided as the biblical precedent.

as the nature of a person's affliction as well as events that are to take place in the future. Mmoni Moasi, a pastor/healer in the church said that a dove descends upon her and she is able to hear the "voice of God" as she receives the gift of prophecy which enables her to discern the ailments of others (*neo ya seporofeto*).¹⁸

Closely related to possession by the Spirit is the ability to speak in tongues. Some important findings emerge when analyzing the Questionnaire results (Appendix 1). First, 40% of the HC respondents claim to speak in tongues (#21), a figure much lower than that of GM. When asked to explain the value of speaking in tongues (#22), all those who answered focused on how it empowered them to minister to others, especially in a healing capacity. One wrote that "it frees my spirit to help others", while another emphasized revelatory power: "I can see what is hidden and the disease within a person". Prophets who engage in serious prayer are enabled to speak in tongues so that they might reveal the mysteries of God.¹⁹ Spirit control and/or speaking in tongues is primarily understood as a gift to the church body, and secondarily as a benefit for the individual. The communal nature of these experiences militates against the forces of individualism permeating much of contemporary Botswana society.

5.4.2.3 Prayer And Fasting

In order for healing to take place, HC members strongly believe that concentrated prayer is a necessity for it expresses faith in God's power. As mentioned above, one of the benefits of the wheel dance is that "prayers are heard quickly".²⁰

¹⁸ Personal Interview (13 June 2005). The biblical imagery, especially in relation to Jesus and the Spirit, used in this description is quite obvious (see Matthew 3:16-17 and parallels). Sentswela Madimabe (23 September 2003), the Archbishop's wife, uses similar language: "When a person is in the Spirit (*mo Moyeng*), they change; they feel a wind comes on them giving them power. I want this to happen to me because then I can help others".

¹⁹ It is interesting to note that Archbishop Madimabe compared the revelatory work of the Spirit within the church prophets to his father's experience as a traditional healer. He said that the Spirit speaks and helps him personally to prophesy, while his father would throw the bones, and they would speak to him. He did not say the two were the same but that there are clear parallels. The ability to draw on the world of Setswana images is very evident (Personal Interview, 22 September 2003).

²⁰ J. Madimabe, Personal Interview (22 September 2003).

Some have complained that there has been a decrease in tongue-speaking and healing activity in the church in recent years because members no longer pray as much or as seriously as they did in the past. That said, the Questionnaire results (#40) revealed that prayer still plays an important role in people's lives. Many respondents focused on the power of prayer to protect, heal, help and bless them. When asked how one receives spiritual power (#33), 80% stated that prayer (especially "serious prayer" [*go rapela ka tlhoafalo*]) was the key. They unanimously agreed that it is important to pray in "the name of Jesus" (#41), although the rationales given were split between a focus on Jesus' salvific work as the forgiver of sins, and the belief that Jesus will provide necessary help when asked (#42). The importance of Jesus was underlined by one respondent: "He is the one who gives us life and protects us from all things".

Spiritual dancing is not the only way to increase the efficacy of prayer as fasting from food and sexual intercourse is also believed to have a significant impact. The church body participates in fasts as prompted by the Spirit and/or the angel of the church in order "to receive power to conquer trials" (*go amogela maatla a go fenya meleko*).²¹ Practiced two or three times per year, congregational fasts usually last seven days during which participants meet each evening for prayer, culminating with an all-night service which may also include a sacrifice to break the fast. Lasting an odd number of days (three, five, seven or nine), individual fasts are usually focused on praying for specific requests. Responses from the Questionnaire (#43) reveal that 92% of HC Members believe that fasting is important with half claiming that they "receive the Spirit" or that "there is power in prayer" when fasting.

When discussing this topic with the Archbishop, he emphasized two other aspects of fasting.²² The first was the importance of going to the surrounding hills in order to pray alone. In his explanation he conflated the two stories of the temptation of Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11) and his transfiguration on a high mountain (Matt. 17:1-9). The

²¹ S. Madimabe, Personal Interview (23 September 2003).

²² J. Madimabe, Personal Interviews (22 September 2003 and 14 November 2003).

example of Jesus furnishes proof that spiritual power and revelation from God comes through a determined effort to seek God's favour. Secondly, he mentioned that they pray to both Jesus and the angels, as they are both believed to be sources of "blessing" (*lesego*). Although Madimabe did not equate these activities with those of traditional healers, he is very familiar with the practice of going into the hills to commune with the ancestors (see Amanze 2002:310-314; Mbiti 2004:235). The ability of symbolic actions to carry a heavy semantic "load" is obvious in this instance as this ritual activity draws on familiar ideas from the past, while reinterpreting it through the biblical narrative.²³

5.4.2.4 Songs Of The Spirit

The short choruses sung during the healing ritual described above are also of importance. These songs, often only one or two lines sung repeatedly, are chosen for the way they lend themselves to rhythmic dance, but more importantly they are symbolic word pictures for the congregation. Some of the main themes that emerge in these songs are God's love (*Modimo o lorato* [God is love]) and care (*Mmabaledi wa botshelo ja ka* [Protector of my life]) for his people, along with a deep awareness of the need for the Spirit of God (*Tshela Moya, Ntate* [Pour out the Spirit, Father]). Another noteworthy feature is the way worshippers draw attention to the fact that they are present and waiting for God to work among them (*Ke na yo, Morena* [I am here, Lord]). Along the same lines is the focus on prayer (*Thapelo e na le maatla* [Prayer has power]) and faith (*Tumelo ke thebe* [Faith is a shield]) as keys to experiencing spiritual power.

The connection between song, dance and a desire to connect with the Spirit is obvious in a chorus like "Pour out the Glorious Spirit" (*Tshololela Moya o o Galalelang*) but it may be even more powerful in the HC favorite, *Koloi ya Elijah* (The Chariot of Elijah):

²³ In her discussion of charismatic leaders, Gina Buijs (1995:93) notes their ability to draw on tradition in order to communicate effectively with their followers. "Traditional concepts, symbols and images, even if reinterpreted, are used to facilitate the acceptance of the radically new". One can easily see this process taking place with the HC in their belief that the hills offer the best location for communication with spiritual beings.

*Le nna ke rata go bona manyeloi,
Thabeng ya Sione, le bagalaledi. (2x)
Ga e duma, e a tsamaya,
Koloi ya Elijah. (2x)*

Myself, I want to see the angels,
On Mount Zion, and the glorious ones.
When it roars, it goes,
The chariot of Elijah.

By evoking the biblical story of Elijah, the powerful Spirit-filled prophet of God, with just a few words, the participants are drawn into an atmosphere of expectation. Mimicking the motions of a chariot rider, they enter into a highly physical as well as emotional and spiritual worship experience. Furthermore, this short chorus explicitly mentions a desire to see and connect with angels (*mangeloi*), those powerful spiritual beings believed to act as guardians, intercessors and bearers of messages from God.²⁴ This symbol, in both song and dance, takes HC worshippers from a position of powerlessness to a state where God enters their communal reality and connects with them in Spirit.²⁵

5.4.2.5 Role Of Angels

The topic of angels (*baengele*, or more often the Sesotho, *manyeloi*) has already been briefly mentioned but needs further development. Angels have a prominent role to play in the lives of HC members. On the Questionnaire (Appendix 2), 76% of the respondents claimed to have a personal angel helping them (#37), while 88% believe their church has an angel or angels watching over it (#39). A significant majority (84%) admitted to having prayed to an angel for assistance (#38). These results are in accord with observations gleaned from church services. During the opening communal greetings, it is common to hear people thank their personal angel and/or the angel(s) of the HC for watching over them, supplying them with food and protecting them. When all have shared, they kneel and pray for the angels to come and minister to them.

²⁴ Another chorus which highlights the significance of angels in the ASC cosmology is: *Manyeloi a nkuka, a nkisa ko thabeng* (The angels lift me up and take me to the mountain); *Manyeloi a thaba a nkuka, a nkisa ko legodimong* (The angels of the mountain lift me up and take to heaven).

²⁵ The power of the wheel dance is summarized by this description from M. Xulu (1996:174) of South Africa: "Spiritual singing is marked by yawning, speaking in tongues, prophesying and a general state of transformation. Often it is at the height of spiritual singing when people are sweating and some are even crying, while others may be lying low on the ground, that the Holy Spirit is felt to be present. At this point those who have opened up for the Holy Spirit receive enormous powers from God..."

The Archbishop explained that all Christians receive an angel at baptism, and that the church has a powerful angel watching over it.²⁶ “Every flock has a shepherd (*modisa*), so the church also has an angel watching over it”. These angels act as intermediaries on behalf of church members, receiving prayer requests and then bringing them to God. Another pastor, Star Molefe, noted that the angels are led by the Spirit: “If you do not have the Spirit, then there is no angel who can help you”. Furthermore, angels play an important role in assisting the prophets in their healing ministry. This is borne out by her description: “An angel is a spirit who helps you to see spiritual things, a spirit who reveals something – a spirit of prophecy”.²⁷ Another pastor also focused on the role of angels in the healing process; they come as spirits to use (*go dirisa*) and instruct (*go laola*) the prophet healers.²⁸

It is important to note the role of angelic assistance in the healing rituals of the HC, but a few comments should also be made regarding the identity of angels in the HC belief system. It would seem that while some ASCs have tended to equate ancestors with angels (Makhubu 1988:64-65; Anderson 1993:34), the HC tries not to do so. According to one HC leader, “some people believe that when one dies, one changes into an angel, but actually the angels change into the form of the dead to give messages – they are messengers of God” (*barongwa ba Modimo*).²⁹ The reason they disguise their appearance is to diminish the fear most people would have if faced with a supernatural being. HC leaders also caution their followers to examine the messages received from angels because “Satan can also disguise himself as an angel” (2 Cor.

²⁶ Personal Interview (14 November 2003). A prime example is the testimony heard during a RBP service (28 June 2003): “I give thanks to the ‘angel of Revelation’ (*Ienyeloi la Tshenolo*) who has given me food and clothes”. Other church leaders referred to the angels of the churches mentioned in Revelation 2-3 as a precedent for their belief.

²⁷ Personal Interview (17 June 2005).

²⁸ M. Moasi, Personal Interview (13 June 2005).

²⁹ S. Madimabe, Personal Interview (13 November 2003). Anderson (1993:34) recorded the same observation in his research. However, Archbishop Kapaletswe (Personal Interview, 2 November 2003) maintained that each church has its own angel, and in their case, “the founder of the church is the angel of RBP. Their angel will help them in all areas, as long as they call on him”.

11:14).³⁰ While the angels may have assumed many of the functions of the ancestors, they are believed to be unique spiritual beings. The degree to which all members of the church maintain this distinction is difficult to ascertain.

5.4.3 The Spirit And The Diagnosis Of Disease

Members of the HC incorporate significant aspects of the Setswana ideology into their belief system as evidenced by their Questionnaire responses. Over 90% believe that deceased relatives can communicate with the living (#48), and almost half (48%) claim to have been harassed by a witch (#34). On account of these beliefs, it is not enough to simply treat an illness, one must uncover the cause or source of disease. While many can accept a Western bio-medical explanation for an illness, that still does **not** answer the more important questions of “Why me?,” “Why now?” and “Who would do this to me?” Without knowing the *cause*, it is impossible to provide the *cure*. Therefore spiritual revelation and prophecy is highly important in the quest to provide a diagnosis.

5.4.3.1 Pollution And Evil Spirits

As mentioned in Chapter Three (3.4.2.1), the HC teaches that God is the ultimate cause of disease, for he uses illness, witchcraft and even Satan to discipline his children. The majority of illnesses and misfortunes are diagnosed in a manner largely consistent with the Setswana framework for disease (*bolwetsi*) with the exception that whereas the ancestors were normally held to enforce cultural taboos, now God is believed to punish directly those who transgress biblical law. For example, someone who breaks the Levitical prohibition against eating pork has polluted themselves and will suffer consequences. But even in this regard there is considerable overlap, as many of the Mosaic laws intersect with Setswana custom. Transgressions of biblical and church law often require the member to either purge themselves or wash off the pollution as a condition of restoration.

³⁰ I. Tsholofelo, Personal Interview (14 November 2003).

In concert with much of Botswana society, a primary concern for HC members is the attack of witches and sorcerers (*boloi*). The spirit of witchcraft is often equated with the presence of “evil” (*bosula*) or “unclean” (*maswe*) spirits. The exact nature of these “spirits” seems somewhat ambiguous as HC members perceive them less as individualized beings, and more as the sinful dispositions of a person.³¹ In relation to witchcraft, HC members repeatedly referred to a “spirit of jealousy” (*moya wa lefufa*), “a spirit that wanted to kill” (*moya o o batlang go bolaya*), and “an unhappy heart” (*pelo e e sa siamang*). The issue of jealousy was paramount as they pointed to the desire (*keletso*) to possess something belonging to another. Unfortunately these inner drives cause one to steal, kill and destroy, resulting in the rupture of relationships. These are the spirits that must be purged and exorcised, for they lead to witchcraft and other diseases.³²

At the same time, church members also affirmed the existence of spiritual beings that can harass and torment individuals. For example, when a witch or sorcerer dies, people must be spiritually protected because an evil spirit (*moya o o bosula*) may come out of them and go into another. They also affirmed their belief in the existence of *tokoloshe*, “a capricious, anthropomorphous, dwarf-like male animal (usually described as about three feet high) with obscene sexual connotations and witchcraft associations” (Anderson 2006:125). Believed to abuse women sexually at night, these supernatural beings have been blamed by some for spreading AIDS and contributing to the rising divorce rate in the country (Kealotswe 2001:225-226). They also speak of other spirits of unknown origin that harass those people who have not been properly protected spiritually. Church leaders are adamant that ancestral spirits (*badimo*) should not be identified as the demonic evil spirits mentioned in the Bible.³³

³¹ Harries (2006:156) makes a similar observation based on his experience in Kenya.

³² For an extensive discussion of ASC beliefs and practices concerning evil spirits and exorcism, see Daneel (1983:57-93); Oosthuizen (1988:3-22); and Anderson (2006:116-133).

³³ I. Tsholofelo, Personal Interview (14 November 2003), and M. Moasi, Personal Interview (13 June 2005). Much additional information regarding “unclean spirits” was related to me in a lengthy group discussion (7 July 2007) with HC leaders following a healing ritual for a young man suffering from what was diagnosed as a witchcraft induced illness. These leaders unanimously agreed that the ancestors (*badimo*) should be identified as “the dead elders of the community” (*batsadi ba rona ba ba tlhokafetseng*). See Chapter Six for further discussion of this topic.

5.4.3.2 The Role Of Prophecy

HC members believe that through prayer, and the mediation of the prophet or healer, the Spirit will provide the necessary revelation (*tshenolo* or *ponotshegelo*) of the nature of the disease to the healing ministers. Almost all members (96%) assert that prophecy takes place in the church (#24), and 68% of Questionnaire respondents claim to have had a personal vision from the Spirit (#25). Those who are especially empowered by the Spirit - prophets (*baporofeti*), seers (*balebi*), healers (*basebelets*) and examiners/diagnosticians (*batlhatlhobi*) - form the backbone of the HC. These individuals tend to be identified in one of two ways. For some, the Spirit gives them a specific message for another church member, and/or the ability to see (*go ranola*, or *go leba*) events in the future. Often this takes place when they are in the Spirit during the wheel dance. With novice prophets, their revelations are shared with the entire congregation so that their messages can be tested by the experienced healers in the church.

For many who have been called to a healing ministry, their experience is similar to that of a traditional healer in that they may become sick, see visions and even find themselves put into a deep sleep.³⁴ Archbishop Madimabe referred to “spiritual sickness” (*bolwetsi jwa semoya*) as the “call of God” (*pitso ya Modimo*), and suggested that the call to become a traditional doctor may appear similar to the call to be a prophet healer. The important issue is that the person must turn to God’s will, not to self interest. Frequently it will take extended periods of prayer before the person is able to serve in the church. There is little one can do to receive the gift of “seeing” but prayer is necessary for the Spirit to work powerfully.

Shake Madimabe, one of the Archbishop’s daughters, provides a good example of the spiritual battle involved in this type of call. She asserts that she had often been tormented by her ancestors who want her to become a traditional healer. Along with receiving numerous visions, she has suffered personally from stomach ailments and

³⁴ J. Madimabe, Personal Interview (22 September 2003). Nussbaum (1985:73-74, 95-96) describes the same phenomenon in Lesotho spiritual churches.

mental anguish, while her son struggles with a learning disability. The church has interpreted her experience as a call to a healing ministry, and she is believed to be imbued with significant spiritual power in prayer. A number of the healing remedies discussed below have been employed, with varying degrees of effectiveness, in an effort to help her find freedom and healing.³⁵

5.4.3.3 Means Of Receiving Prophetic Revelation

As illustrated in the account of the HC healing service above, during most church services the sick are brought forward to sit or kneel in the center of the circle of dancing church members. The dancing and singing is believed to stir up the Spirit, who then reveals to the prophet(s) the nature of the disease and the necessary treatment. At times, the prophecy may be spoken in tongues that can only be interpreted with help from the Spirit. Another common way of hearing from the Spirit involves the use of a Bible. Mmoni Moasi describes her diagnostic method (*go tlhatlhoba*) in the following manner.³⁶ First, she prays for the person and discusses the problem with them; then she instructs the patient to put a Bible on their lap and allow it to fall open. Finally a passage from the open Bible is read and discussed, and then they pray again in order to discover the cause of the problem and its cure (also Lagerwerf 1984:68-70). The assumption is that the Spirit will reveal the true cause of the problem, along with the proper remedy.

The diagnostic methods described above most often take place in the church building, or at the church headquarters, as it is believed to be the best location to experience the presence and power of the Spirit. But visions and dreams can take place anywhere. Some prophets will go to mountains where they spend days in prayer and fasting, while others receive visions while sitting quietly in their homes. During times of prayer, dancing and singing, prophets will often be shown something by God (*go bontshiwa ke Modimo*) or hear a voice (*go utlwa lentswe*) that tells them what is wrong

³⁵ Shake Madimabe, Personal Interview (13 June 2005).

³⁶ Personal Interview (13 June 2005).

with a person.³⁷ Other prophet healers claim they feel painful sensations in their own bodies when they pray for the sick and lay hands on them. The Spirit helps them to sense what is physically wrong so that they can make a diagnosis and suggest a treatment.

5.4.4 The Spirit, Treatment And Healing Media

5.4.4.1 The Importance Of Faith

When moving from diagnosis to actual healing remedies, the focus shifts to removing anything unclean that may weaken a person, while also seeking to bless, protect and strengthen as led by the Spirit (Oosthuizen 1988:12-15). As in diagnosis, the key is still prayer and faith. HC members quickly confess: “Victory over dis-ease comes through prayer” (*Phenyo ya bolwetsi ke thapelo*). During a service, a preacher declared, “if you want to be healed, the key is to commit to God and pray. It does not matter the disease, even AIDS, can be healed”.³⁸ Nearly all Questionnaire (Appendix 1) respondents (96%) believed that Christians can be protected from witches and evil spirits through prayer (#35 & #36). The importance of faith in the word of God, not just objects that have been blessed, is also demonstrated by the large number of respondents (88%) who agreed that it is important to confess verbally the promises of God in order to receive healing or blessing (#66). According to many of the leaders, the physical items used in the healing rituals are only important inasmuch as they stimulate faith within the people present. “The objects have power to heal sickness and protect from witchcraft because of prayer and faith. If a person just uses them without true faith, they won’t help him/her”.³⁹ At this point, the distinction between the symbolic and magical seems reasonably clear.

³⁷ This is not unusual as B.A. Pauw (1960:198-201) recorded this phenomenon among Batswana ASCs long ago.

³⁸ HC, Gaborone (1 February 2004). However, only 40% of the HC respondents to the Questionnaire (#29) believed that AIDS can be healed, while 28% claim to know someone who has been healed of AIDS (#30). The Archbishop (22 September 2003) himself said AIDS cannot be cured but if the person repents, they can live for a number of years with the disease.

³⁹ S. Madimabe, Personal Interview (23 September 2003).

The Questionnaire results, however, raise the question as to whether or not it is possible to distinguish form from content or meaning. Almost all respondents (96%) believe that certain material objects are infused with spiritual power to heal, protect or possibly harm a person (#31). When asked what these articles are, most pointed to the various healing media employed by their church such as strings, ropes, cords, water and sacrifices (#32). Whether or not the objects are viewed magically as a guaranteed way of assuring oneself of healing, protection or blessing is most likely highly dependent on the individual (see M West 1975:188). Church leadership asserted that the power in these symbols is not inherent, but derived from the Spirit through prayer. Many church members would claim that if someone has enough faith, any disease can be healed, but the rituals and symbols are important. They point to the biblical example of the man who needed greater faith for the healing of his child: "I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief" (Mk. 9:24). To tell a suffering person to have more faith is not enough, as they need to see and touch something. Therefore, the church employs various objects and rituals familiar to Batswana in order to build up faith in those who have come seeking help.⁴⁰

5.4.4.2 Laying On Of Hands

The most important healing medium is the "laying on of hands" by the prophet or other healing agent in the church. Church members cite numerous biblical examples such as Jesus healing the leprous man (Mk. 1:41-42) as their precedent for this activity. When prophet healers pray and lay hands on people, the life-giving power of the Spirit flows through them and into the diseased person. The role of massage (*go sedila*), along with prayer, is also encouraged, especially for women who want to become pregnant or for the protection of unborn children.⁴¹ The HC approach accords well with the observations of

⁴⁰ I. Tsholofelo, Personal Interview (14 November 2003). He suggests that it is "on account of our physical nature" (*ka ntlha ya mokgwa wa senama*) that people require the use of symbols and rituals to build their faith.

⁴¹ S. Molefe, Personal Interview (17 June 2005). Either cooking or olive oil (*lookwane/mafura*) is sometimes used when performing massage, and as an aid in prayer. Mark 6:13 and James 5:14 are the biblical precedents for its use.

Paul Makhubu (1988:77): “Sick people need to be touched. Imagine Jesus touching the ‘untouchables’ of His day. Laying hands on a sick person conveys a message of love, hope and being wanted”. For those who are struggling, it is critical to demonstrate God’s love and care in a highly personal and visible manner.

5.4.4.3 Water And Physical Objects

Water has an important place in almost all HC healing rituals. It is precisely because of its widespread use that the HC, and indeed all ASCs, are so often derisively referred to as “water churches” (*dikereke tsa metsi*). In Botswana, rain (*pula*) has long been central to life and wellbeing and, when the country designated its currency as Pula, it was adopted as the national symbol of prosperity. One could almost say, “No rain, no life.” Therefore the use of water in life-giving rituals makes perfect sense. While flowing water is preferred for rituals, even ordinary tap or well water can be used as long as it has been prayed over. There are many ways in which water is employed. Sometimes it is simply prayed over or blessed and then given to the person seeking help. Once they have drunk the water, it can flow to all areas of the body, cleansing and removing whatever is causing the dis-ease. Pointing to passages such as Ezekiel 36:25 and Jesus’ words in the Gospel of John (4:10-15; 7:37-39), HC members draw a direct line from their practices to Scripture. Water symbolizes and conveys the Spirit. The one in need is filled with the Spirit, thus purifying, healing and fortifying their inner person. In order to purify those who have been defiled by contact with the dead, blessed water is also sprinkled or splashed (*go kgatsha*) on them (in Amanze 1994:133).

At other times water is used as a cleansing bath in order to wash away all impurities, evil forces or bad luck (*senyama/sefifi*) clinging to the person. Other things may be added to the bath, including salt and ashes (see below). The biblical warrant for using salt is found in 2 Kings 2:19-22 when Elisha added salt to a spring in order to cleanse it. Baths, which may include massage, are usually administered by same-sex persons, and often it is not performed by the healer but rather by his or her helper.

Patients are sometimes placed with their head under a blanket and a pail of steaming hot water in an effort to sweat out any impurities. Cleansing rituals conducted in rivers or dams often require the diseased person to submerge themselves seven times. Biblical passages used to support these rituals are the healing of Naaman (2 Ki. 5:13-14), the healing pool of Bethesda (Jn. 5:1-5) and Jesus sending the blind man to the Pool of Siloam to wash (Jn. 9:6-7).

Other elements are often added to water in order to induce vomiting (*go kwisa/go phalatsa*) or to act as an emetic (*sepeiti*). In these cases, water is mixed with salt, vinegar, milk and ashes (*sewacho*, literally “cleanser”) in this process. Again the emphasis here is on cleansing or purging the body of pollutants. This could be in the case of simple stomach problems or, more seriously, when dealing with the poison (*sejeso*) from a witch or sorcerer (see Lagerwerf 1984:71-72; Anderson 2000c:294-295). Produced by burning different trees, plants and sacrificed animals, the use of ashes in healing rituals has much in common with the medicines employed by traditional doctors. The medicines are burnt because it is believed that this purifies them.⁴² Ashes, or *sewacho*, are also commonly used in protective rituals such as the blessing of a child, preparation for marriage and caring for the bereaved. Since children are believed to be especially susceptible to spiritual attack, eight days after the birth of a boy, and fourteen days after the birth of a girl, a church leader visits the family and prays for the child, making the sign of the cross on top of the child’s head with the ashes.⁴³ Biblical justification for the use of ashes as a gift from God is found in Exodus 15:22-26 where Moses threw a piece of wood in the waters of Marah to purify them. The purifying use of ashes in certain Old Testament rituals is also believed to show that God approves of this healing method (see Num. 19:9, 17-18).

⁴² J. Madimabe, Personal Interview (22 September 2003). HC prophets know they must be careful when using “ashes” (*sewacho*) as they can cause very bad vomiting or diarrhea. In fact, Archbishop Madimabe informed me that they have greatly reduced their dependence on “purging” practices and the use of ashes because they know that it does more harm than good for many people in the advanced stages of AIDS and tuberculosis.

⁴³ J. Madimabe, Personal Interview (14 November 2003).

Like many other ASCs, the HC employs numerous objects that are either physically attached to or worn on the body. In a vision from the Spirit, a prophet may see an afflicted individual along with material of various colours. Based on the revelation, a cord is woven to protect the person from a specific spiritual attack or illness. A patient might also be instructed to wear a cord, rope or belt if they are suffering in a particular area of their body (for example, the wrist or leg). It is common practice to dip these cords in water or oil and pray over them. In doing so these cords become objects of power, able to protect and strengthen the individual spiritually and physically (see Oosthuizen 1988:12-13). As mentioned in Chapter Three (3.3.1.3), the primary purpose of church uniforms is to establish membership in the HC, but they are also used to protect and strengthen church members. When blessing the uniform, Ephesians 6:10-18 is often read as it commands Christians to put on the full armour of God in order to defeat the forces of Satan. In addition, it should be noted that certain unique protective garments (*seaparo sa phemelo*) are worn on account of special spiritual revelation. These garments may have symbols on them such as stars, moons, crosses, or handprints. These outer garments are simply copies of the powerful “inner” garments that the prophets can “see”. While these “inner” garments are put on through prayer, the outer garments provide additional power essential for spiritual protection.⁴⁴

Like the cords mentioned above, walking staffs or metal rods are often used by healers to help someone experience more strength or power for life. These staffs are prayed for and blessed by a recognized healer before being used in the prophetic ministry. As illustrated in the service described above, the healing mediator, while praying, lays their staff on the painful location, or else on the person’s head, in order to encourage the flow of spiritual power into the person. At times, staffs may also be used to drive out evil spirits and demons of witchcraft, although the church prefers to purge these spirits by means of emetics and induced vomiting. Moses’ staff is often held up as an example (Ex. 4:1-5) as well as Jesus’ command to his disciples to take a staff when he sent them out to preach and heal (Mk. 6:8) (see Lagerwerf 1984:71). Candles, usually white, are also employed in

⁴⁴ J. Madimabe, Personal Interview (22 September 2003). According to M. Moasi (13 June 2005), the garments are worn “so that your angel will work well for you” (*gore lenyelo la gago le go berekele sentle*).

almost all healing rituals for they symbolize the presence of the “glorious” or “shining” Spirit. Viewed in this manner, these ritual candles encourage those in distress to gain a sense that God is aware of their affliction and wants to help. Candles also have power for they can dispel the darkness (*lefifi*) surrounding the person seeking help.⁴⁵ As with many of these objects the line between the symbolic and magical is often rather blurred.

5.4.4.4 Sacrifice And Burnt Offerings⁴⁶

At this point, I will only make brief reference to the use of sacrifices (*sethabelo*) and burnt offerings (*secheso*) in the healing process since this particular ritual is one of the primary topics of Chapter Six. Returning to the service described above, the mention of a “white lamb on an altar” made explicit the connection between performing a sacrifice and experiencing healing. Some years ago, the HC supplied James Amanze (1994:133) with a brief description and explanation of this ritual.

The church continues the Tswana and Old Testament sacrifices of animals. Sacrifices are made for the sick. Sheep, goats and cattle are offered. The animal to be offered is determined by the pastor or prophet or healer or the Bishop. All the intestines of the beast are burnt on the fire while the rest of the meat is cooked and eaten by those present. Some of the blood is burnt with the intestines of the animal. The rest of the blood is sprinkled on the patient. The sick person seats (sic) near the burnt offering until the offering is completely burnt. The sick are prayed for before and after the sacrifice is burnt. During the sacrifice prayers are offered to Jesus and to the ancestral spirits of the patient. The ancestors are asked to leave the sick person alone and that if they are hungry they must eat the smell of the offering.

According to the Archbishop, the church instructs the person “that they must separate from the ancestors and turn to Christ in order to please God” (*gore a kgatlhe Modimo, a kgaogana le badimo, a bo a sokologe mo go Jesu*).⁴⁷

⁴⁵ S. Madimabe, Personal Interview (13 November 2003).

⁴⁶ The Setswana terms are *sethabelo* (sacrifice, literally “a stabbing/piercing”), or *secheso* (burnt offering). Translation of these terms is highly problematic due to the religious and cultural connotations embedded within them. For this reason, Becken (1993:336) has argued that it is better to use the term “ritual killing”. I have retained the term “sacrifice” in this study due to its use by English-speaking members of the HC.

⁴⁷ J. Madimabe, Personal Interview (22 September 2003).

Within the HC, two types of sacrifice are practiced, both related to healing, protection and blessing.⁴⁸ The first type, described above, is performed in response to a message from the ancestors in a dream or the prophet/healer's diagnosis that the disease is a result of displeasure on the part of the ancestors. The second type of sacrifice places less if any emphasis on the ancestors, although their blessing is still requested. In this case the sacrifice is intended as a sign of serious, concentrated prayer and proleptic thanksgiving for answered prayer. HC members are sacrificing in faith, believing and giving thanks for the healing and blessing that is to come.

5.4.5 Summary

Healing rituals and symbols are central to the life and activities of the HC. The life-giving Spirit of God is believed to be present in their song, dance and symbolic restorative and protective media. As God's people worship with their whole being, the Spirit moves among them, giving messages to the prophets who then mediate healing and freedom to the suffering. At the same time, they fully appreciate the social dimensions of their healing measures. Disease is primarily understood as a rupture in social harmony, and one of the key roles of the Spirit is to repair and restore the community. Although the focus may turn to God, the ancestors, witches, or even nature itself, frequently the cause of their struggle is located in the social upheaval taking place within the country. From this perspective, their healing activities can be understood as both a way of coping with difficulties in their daily lives, as well as a coded form of resistance against "the powers that be".

5.5 Goodnews Ministries And Deliverance

In the urban context of Gaborone, there are tremendous prospects for personal advancement as well as stiff competition for educational opportunities, employment and

⁴⁸ See M. West (1975:173) for a helpful discussion regarding ASC sacrifices in Soweto, South Africa. He concluded that animal offerings could be interpreted in a variety of ways by the participants: "for some it may be a thanksgiving, for others a sacrifice to God as found in the Old Testament, and for yet others it may be taken as an offering to the shades". It is likely that there are still other possible interpretations.

marital partners. At GM, preachers relentlessly encourage their listeners to keep making progress, as this example illustrates: “I am moving forward. Temptations may come but I will conquer.... Walk as a giant because you’ve got power in you. Don’t just stand there, we’re going somewhere. You are moving forward, you’re moving up, not down!”⁴⁹ But in this push to advance, they recognize there are bound to be obstacles and setbacks. In the GM ideology, these problems are identified as demonic in nature, related to covenants made in the past (see Chapter Six) or present-day curses, and all in need of deliverance ministry.

5.5.1 Deliverance Ministry

Similar to most services at the HC, there is also a significant period of time devoted to prayer ministry (often an hour or longer) during the last half of GM services. Immediately following the sermon, it is common for the speaker to call upon the worship band to lead the congregation in singing for a brief period. While singing the final chorus repeatedly, the pastor will begin to call people forward to commit their lives to Jesus and enter into the “born again” experience. Those who respond are led in the “salvation prayer”, focusing on repentance and a commitment to follow Jesus. Usually the service will then smoothly transition into a time of prayer for those who desire it. Members and visitors alike are invited to the front for prayer and deliverance from whatever problems they face. The following is a direct transcript from a deliverance service similar to many I observed at GM.⁵⁰

The way of Jesus is the way of power, way of life, way of anointing, way of blessing, way of healing, way of deliverance, way of eternal life. For Jesus said the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, but I am come, I am come, that they may have life, and have it more abundantly. Child of God, you have abundant life. Live like you have abundant life, not like someone who is merely ‘making it through life’. You’ve got abundant life.

⁴⁹ GM, Francistown (10 March 2002).

⁵⁰ GM, “Deliverance Service” (2 January 1997). Accessed 15 June 2005. Although this service may seem dated, I was provided with this cassette recording when I asked for specific information regarding GM beliefs concerning deliverance ministry. The general pattern of prophetic words, prayers, songs, tongues-speaking and deliverance ministry depicted in this service conforms well to what I observed in numerous GM services.

Say to someone next to you, “I have abundant life.” I am not just making it through life. Tell him, “Man, I’ve got abundant life.” And act like it, walk like it, think like it, talk like it, smile like it, stand like it, do it! Because we’ve got abundant life, and Jesus has given us that abundant life!

Stand on our feet this morning and lift and exalt Jesus Christ (the band should come forward). We’re going to minister with the band this morning.

Lift Jesus high. If you’ve got sickness in your body, it will begin to go. If something is troubling you, it will begin to go. And we want to destroy all those who think they are strongholds. Praise the name of Jesus. Let us lift the name of Jesus. Praise the name of Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. Let’s tell him we love because he has first loved us, and given us eternal life. Praise the name of Jesus. Hallelujah! This is our time of receiving. *(Music plays in the background)*

Sweep over my soul, sweep over my soul,
Please Spirit sweep over my soul
My rest is so sweet as I sit at Jesus’ feet
Sweet Spirit, sweep over my soul. *(Repeated 6 times slowly)*

While the congregation hums the song, Apostle Monnakgosi begins to pray:
Spirit of God, Spirit of power, Spirit of anointing, Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of Glory, Spirit of Life, Spirit of Truth, sweet Spirit of God, sweep over our lives. Sweet Spirit of power, Oh, the dynamite spirit of God, sweep over our lives.

Tongue-speaking (30 seconds) *(Oh Raba ma goshi, oh raba ka soya, oh raba ka soya, she raba ku raba ka sonda tu she raba ku raba ka honda ka sheka ab sanda....)*

Spirit of life, Spirit of power, Spirit of power, Spirit of life, Spirit of truth, Spirit of fire. Sweep right down. *(Tongue-speaking for 2 minutes with music in the background)*

Spirit of God, Spirit of truth. Thank you, Lord, that the yoke is broken in Jesus’ name. Yes, Spirit of death, we command you to go right now in Jesus’ name. Yes, in Jesus’ name we break your powers, in the name of Jesus. The power of God.

(Music continues to play) I sense a great anointing in this place. Oh Hallelujah. There is someone who has a problem with a left hip, if you’re there come here right now. There are some people with a back pain, just come here quickly. Someone has a headache, especially on the sides. Glory to Jesus! Come forward quickly. There’s someone with a problem with the stomach – the pains don’t come every time, they just come sometimes. Just come forward also. *(Interspersed with various expressions of thanks to Jesus)*

There’s someone who has problem with the right breast, and it’s a lady, and she has feared, I can hear her in my spirit saying, “Maybe I have cancer.” Just come forward

and let the Lord set you free. And there's someone who has a problem with their teeth. There is a pain as if someone is stabbing you in the back of the mouth. God wants to set you free right now. This is the day that the Lord has made and we will rejoice and be glad in it, as God's deliverance comes forth.

We are going to rejoice in the deliverance of God. I am going to call the servants of God to come forward quickly, and while they are coming forward, and if you have a word of knowledge about a certain problem, please come forward quickly because we want the people of God to be delivered. This is what God has promised and he will do it. Lift your hands up unto God.

(Tongue-speaking while praying for the sick) Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

If you have a word of knowledge about a situation, then come quickly. If there is anyone hear who has problems with his or her ears, can you please come to the front right now. And if the pain is going along your neck, if you are right here up front, God is going to touch you right now.

Lift up your hands to God. Beloved, we ask you to extend your hands toward us right here. Oh, the anointing of God is here (*short outburst of tongues*). Ushers make sure you are right behind people so that no one will fall and be hurt.

Father, in the name of Jesus we thank you for your anointing upon your servants this day, Lord to set your people free and to deliver them from all the works of the devil, in the name of Jesus. We thank you Lord, touch our hands, Mighty God, so that as they touch your people, they shall be delivered. Thank you, Lord, we believe it and we receive it in Jesus' name.

(Instruction to leaders) Pray for the people. (*Tongue-speaking interspersed throughout the prayers spoken by Apostle Monnakgosi and his assistants*).

In Jesus name, I rebuke you sickness and disease, I command you to go in the mighty name of Jesus. I receive, I receive, I receive. I receive in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. I cast you out ailment. I command you to go in the name of Jesus. In the name of Jesus, I rebuke every lie of the enemy, in the name of Jesus, upon this saint and upon this child of God! I command you to go, problem in the ear, problems of the body, you go, right now, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

In Jesus' precious name, I release the healing power of God, in the name of Jesus! In the name of JESUS (*said with special emphasis*), we rebuke you enemy and command you to go in Jesus name. We command you to go in the mighty name of Jesus of Nazareth. Thank you, Jesus. Receive your healing. Problem, I don't care who you are, or what you are, I command you to go in Jesus' name. I cast you out and I destroy you, devil, I break your power in Jesus' name. Thank you Jesus, Thank you Lord. (*Tongue-speaking while band continues to play*) Praise God, with

the blood of Jesus Christ, we seal him with the blood. And with the blood of Jesus Christ, we destroy, we mock you Satan, in Jesus' name.

Let's give the Lord a good hand! How many feel delivered, and feel healed? Glory to God! Lift up your hand if Jesus has healed you today. Thank you, Jesus. Our God is a delivering God!

Immediately following this session of the prayer ministry, a middle-aged woman was asked to share her testimony. She had come to the church earlier in the week complaining of swelling in her feet and legs as well as considerable pain in her abdomen. During the course of the consultation, she shared that she had been troubled by a *tokoloshe* (an evil creature linked to witchcraft) for a considerable period of time. The Apostle and some assistants prayed for her, after which she experienced a measure of freedom and a lack of fear, but she still sought additional prayer. The Apostle provided a good example of a 'deliverance prayer':

(Tongue-speaking) In the name of Jesus, you spirit of the devil, you spirit of witchcraft, we destroy you in the name of Jesus. All the effects of *tokoloshe*, in Jesus' name, be thou gone in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. We rebuke the covenant, we cut all those chains. Fear, we bind you fear, come out of her right now in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. We release the anointing, Oh God, we release the power of God, we release the glory of God in the mighty name of Jesus.

(Tongue-speaking)

Yes, we speak the peace of God, the security, the life of God, we bind bitterness and hatred in the name of Jesus. All the demons that have been pronounced upon her, we cast you all out, come out in Jesus' name and never come into her again. In the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus, even the ones that have barely troubled her.

(More tongue-speaking)

We sanctify her womb, we sanctify her stomach, we sanctify her belly in the name of Jesus. We declare it holy, from this day forward, in the name of Jesus, every ligament, every part of her body. Devil, you are defeated in the name of Jesus. We speak to you, you feet and legs, in the name of Jesus, we bind the swelling in Jesus' name. We rebuke every lie and deception of the devil, in Jesus' holy name.

(Tongue-speaking)

In the mighty name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we call it done, we call it done, for the feet are normal, in the name of Jesus. Wherever they shall tread, the ground shall be blessed. We release the fire of the Spirit of God, the fire of life, in the name of Jesus (*5 times*). We release good sleep upon her. We release rest upon her mind and body. And we seal her with the blood of Jesus. *(Tongue-speaking)*

In Jesus' name, we call it done, mighty God. Lord, we release the anointing, the power, the glory, in the mighty name of Jesus. Thank you for delivering her, Oh mighty God. Hallelujah.

5.5.2 The Spiritual Warfare Perspective

5.5.2.1 Disease And The Demonic

Even a cursory comparison of the GM service with that of the HC ritual provided earlier in the chapter reveals considerable discontinuities. One of, if not the, critical differences is the GM belief that all problems, disease and misfortune originate with the devil. GM, like many other NPCs, has a strongly developed two kingdom theology which envisions a cosmic battle between God and Satan, the results of which are experienced on earth (Wessels 1997:362-65; Kalu 1998:9-10). Focusing heavily on the deliverance/exorcism ministry of Jesus (e.g., Mk. 1:21-28) and the Apostle Paul's references to spiritual battle (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-20), they believe Christians are called to enter the fray.⁵¹ Any problem or obstacle, including sickness, is the result of demonic attack, and these spirits must be "cast out", "bound", "rebuked" or "commanded to go" forever in the name of Jesus. In the example above, it is no coincidence that Apostle Monnakgosi referred to John 10:10 just prior to the deliverance ministry ritual, for it spotlights the fundamental difference between the thief (i.e., the devil) who steals, kills and destroys, and Jesus who delivers abundant life. The good news for GM members is that God has provided victory over Satan and his forces through the name and blood of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The comments above could leave the impression that GM has completely disregarded the Setswana framework for understanding disease; but this would be far from the truth (see Walls 1996a:5,9). There remains a strong concern to deal with familiar supernatural forces such as witchcraft, spiritual beings identified as *badimo* and

⁵¹ In a morning service (24 March 2002), Apostle Monnakgosi proclaimed: "I'm excited in my heart because this is war. I want us to face it and be victorious. Be assured that you have victory irrespective of what you see right now. Satan, he is pregnant! Give him more pain, so that in the end he gives birth to nothing".

the malicious *tokoloshe*. The most substantial change, and the one I will deal with at length in Chapter Six, is that the *badimo* are no longer identified as “elderly or deceased ancestors” but as evil spirits in disguise, sent by Satan to wreak havoc.⁵² In light of their understanding of biblical teaching, there is no middle ground when dealing with spiritual powers because one is either accessing the power of God or the power of Satan.

The responses to the Questionnaire (Appendix 1) provide further illumination of GM beliefs surrounding healing, deliverance and spiritual protection. Again, it should be emphasized that healing is understood much more broadly than the relief of physical illness, as GM members pray for “prosperity, peace and divine health”.⁵³ It is noteworthy that while members unanimously believe that all diseases can be healed, including AIDS (#29), less than two-thirds (61%) claimed to have experienced healing in the church (#26). This is likely because many members are young and in relatively good health. Those who had been healed mentioned relief from a wide variety of ailments, many of a somewhat minor nature. However, in a much more serious vein, a significant number (39%) of the respondents claimed to know someone who had been healed of AIDS.⁵⁴

According to church leaders the need for both deliverance and protection from spiritual attack is acute. People wishing to be “born again” must be set free from previous bondages, while even GM members can be afflicted by evil spirits if they have not been living obediently.⁵⁵ In addition, while evil spirits are often identified as specific illnesses, they may also take the form of sinful attitudes such as unforgiveness, lust,

⁵² A large majority of GM members (nearly 90%) do not believe the dead can communicate with the living. If a deceased relative appears in a dream, many interpret this as a demonic attack (a demon appearing in the form of their relative) (Appendix 1, #48 and #49).

⁵³ GM, Gaborone (24 March 2002).

⁵⁴ The GM position on HIV/AIDS is unambiguous – it is an evil spirit. On numerous occasions, GM leaders claimed to have seen people healed of AIDS. In one service (28 April 2002), the Apostle Monnakgosi professed: “Someone is being healed of AIDS right now. Let the spirit of AIDS go in the name of Jesus. You are healed of AIDS in the name of Jesus” (*repeated three times*).

⁵⁵ O. Moseki, Personal Interview (10 June 2005).

deception, rebellion and jealousy, all of which need to be exorcised.⁵⁶ Connected to their vision for material prosperity is the deep concern many church members have for security and protection from witchcraft attacks. The church is also aware that their strong stand against certain practices arising from Setswana culture creates potential for considerable familial conflict, and therefore promises protection against curses and other efforts to oppose the progress of GM members.⁵⁷

5.5.2.2 Worship And Deliverance

Worship in the GM context is a highly energetic experience designed to inspire the congregation to greater levels of commitment, and to empower them to emerge victorious in whatever struggle they face. Many of their favorite songs and choruses emphasize key themes such as power, victory and deliverance. The following three examples highlight their positive confessions of God's ability to help them succeed in life:

All power belongs to Jesus, all power belongs to him,
All power belongs to him, all power belongs to him.

I am a winner in Christ my Lord, a hero I am since I endured,
Like a soldier in the army, I will stand for my Lord.
I am a winner because I trust in the Lord.

I am delivered, praise the Lord
I am delivered by his Word,
Once I was bound by the chains of Satan,
But now I am delivered, praise his name.⁵⁸

At the same time, GM worship leaders take great pains to recognize the awesome glory of God, exhorting the congregation to "praise God!", "give him the glory!", and "lift him higher!" As members worship in Spirit and in truth, they believe God releases his power

⁵⁶ GM, Gaborone (17 March 2002).

⁵⁷ D.D. Monnagosi, Personal Interview (7 May 2002). He claims that "protection from witchcraft" is one of the three issues older members want addressed by churches. The other two are a ministry position in the church and proper burial services.

⁵⁸ GM, Gaborone (24 March 2002).

to set the oppressed free, heal every disease, empower for forward progress and provide financial security.

In a sense, worship is preparatory for the deliverance ministry to follow as the congregation is led into a state of high expectation that God will work powerfully among them. Although GM members generally do not dance, their bodies do sway to the music, they clap their hands, raise their hands, kneel, fall to the floor, cry and even laugh out loud. They are encouraged to participate not only in singing but also by speaking in tongues. At times, someone will share a testimony of how God has worked miraculously in their lives; while on other occasions, a prophetic word is spoken to encourage the congregation towards greater faithfulness. These experiences are all believed to be inspired by the Spirit of God; and therefore, the congregation anticipates that as they move into the deliverance ministry ritual, God will speak through their leaders and liberate those needing deliverance.

During the actual deliverance ministry, worship singing takes a much lower profile as usually only one song is played throughout the entire prayer time. Many of the same behaviours displayed earlier continue, but usually at a somewhat more subdued level. The importance of praying in tongues, while also holding out their hands towards those being delivered, is an important way for the congregation to participate in ministry. Church members, full of the Holy Spirit, are believed to be conduits of God's power for those who are in need of deliverance. Some women in the congregation have a special ministry of lamentations where they weep in prayer, believing that God will hear and move powerfully. Other members, especially men, are often asked to stand behind those being prayed for so that if they fall, they will not hurt themselves. Sometimes the congregation will be asked if they have a word of knowledge or revelation to come forward and share it.

5.5.2.3 Spiritual Empowerment For Warfare

The role of the congregation in deliverance is significant because all GM members are believed to be spiritually gifted by God for ministry.⁵⁹ In Chapter Three (3.3.2.3), I outlined the GM teaching regarding the various means of being spiritually empowered so I will just briefly touch on them here. The “born again” child of God is promised power to experience a completely new kind of life. Using the example of Jesus in Luke 2:52, Apostle Monnakgosi asserts that born again children of God will grow strong in the following areas: spiritually, physically, socially, intellectually and financially.⁶⁰ As those who have received power to overcome the devil, they should expect to enter the battle and help deliver those oppressed by the evil one.

Additional power is, of course, available to those who have been baptized in the Spirit, a second work of God apart from salvation. Most often received through prayer and the laying on of hands by leaders in the church (see Acts 8:15-17), one can also receive the Spirit just by asking the Father (see Lk. 11:13).⁶¹ The primary evidence of having received the Holy Spirit is the gift of speaking in tongues. As one of the GM leaders put it: “When baptized with the Spirit, you speak in tongues, are filled with power, and enabled to do spiritual warfare with the devil”.⁶² GM teaches that the baptism of the Spirit gives Christians authority and spiritual gifts for ministry both in

⁵⁹ Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (2005:128) argues that NPCs advocate the “democratization of religious experience. Theologically, the CMs (Charismatic Ministries) emphasize that the experience of the Holy Spirit is personal and direct and does not need to pass through any priestly filter” (also Anderson 2002:170-71). Theoretically this may be the case, but it is clear that many GM members are looking to their leaders for Holy Spirit power.

⁶⁰ GM, Gaborone (26 January 2003).

⁶¹ However, when asked if they had ever been “seized by the Spirit” (*go tshwerwe ke Moya*) (#23), many GM members appeared not to understand the question, with only a small number (19%) admitting to having had the experience. Many (nearly 40%) claimed that they did not know. My sense is that the issue revolves around both a translation problem and a theological construct. First, GM members prefer to use English, and are most likely unfamiliar with the Setswana idiom, one that is used by traditional healers. This immediately raises the second issue whereby one might be “seized” or “possessed” by an evil spirit, one only speaks of “being filled with”, baptized in” or “receiving” the Holy Spirit. A definitive answer awaits further research.

⁶² GM, Gaborone (12 October 2003).

church and the wider society. These gifts of the Spirit have been divided into three categories: power gifts (special faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles); inspiration/speaking gifts (prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues); and revelation gifts (word of wisdom, word of knowledge, discerning of spirits).⁶³ All of these spiritual endowments are useful during the deliverance ministry ritual.

One of interesting findings on the Questionnaire was that while all members affirmed that they had been baptized in the Spirit (#19), and nearly all spoke in tongues (#21), they did not explicitly link tongues-speaking to ministry to others. For almost all members, it seems that the primary purpose of speaking in tongues is self-edification, especially in terms of relating to God at a deeper level (#22). Considering the frequency of tongue-speaking during the healing ritual, it is somewhat surprising that they made no direct linkage to deliverance ministry. However, the responses given to question #33, asking how one receives spiritual power may provide an explanation. The most popular responses were: “baptism of the Spirit” (42%), “prayer” and “faith in the promises of God”. Considering the direct correlation between speaking in tongues and baptism in the Spirit, it may be assumed that when GM members pray in tongues during the deliverance ritual, they believe they are actively releasing the power of God on the individuals standing before them.

Related to the issue of spiritual empowerment is the role of angelic assistance in deliverance ministry. Although GM does not often refer to angels during their worship services, church leaders affirm that angels have an important part to play in the protection of God’s people. Akofang Andreck explains as follows: “They minister to us – they are spiritual beings sent by God to perform God’s errands. We’re superior to them because they minister to us; they protect us from accidents. They are created beings by God and we do not pray to them.”⁶⁴ The minimal attention given to angels is evident in the Questionnaire responses where just under half of the respondents

⁶³ GM, Gaborone (9 November 2003).

⁶⁴ Personal Interview (17 June 2005).

claimed to have a personal angel helping them (#37), with the same number believing that the church has an angel watching over it (#39). More surprising is the significant number of members (39%) who admitted to having prayed to an angel for help. Perhaps GM members believe angels have more power than their leaders are willing to admit.

5.5.2.4 Prayer and Fasting

When asked how GM practices healing (#10), three responses were given: prayer in Jesus' name (65%), laying on of hands (29%) and fasting (6%). As expected, when asked why prayer was important, respondents tended to focus on communication with God, but many also mentioned that they received power, protection and the ability to overcome difficult situations (#40). All respondents believed that it is important to fast regularly (#43). According to Apostle Monnakgosi, prayer, which includes fasting, is one of three key emphases of the church. As he says, "If you want to move in power, you must be a 'prayerful somebody'".⁶⁵ During a special month of prayer, the church was reminded of their motto: "With and in prayer we prosper, without prayer we faint" (Lk. 18:1).⁶⁶ During a prayer seminar held in June 2005, Sister M. Boitshwarelo spoke on the subject of "priesthood prayer".⁶⁷ She began with the challenge: "We've come to pierce the powers of darkness and receive more from God". She then provided an allegorical interpretation of the priestly sacrifices of animals and unleavened bread as an example of how Christians should pray today. She argued that prayers should be without leaven, meaning that they are not full of "hot air" but straight to the point. Furthermore, prayers must be anointed with oil, full of the Holy Spirit so that one can do powerful things. Thirdly, prayers should have a sweet savor before the Lord, and this can only take place as one speaks the Word of God, and claims his promises. Finally, prayer must be made by fire to the Lord, again focusing on the presence of the Spirit

⁶⁵ GM, Gaborone (24 March 2002).

⁶⁶ GM, Prayer Ministry hand-out (February 2002).

⁶⁷ GM, Gaborone (18 June 2005).

(and especially speaking in tongues). These are “bombshell-type” prayers that God cannot help but hear and answer.

As mentioned above, both prayer and fasting are believed to be essential for all Christians. Although Old Testament precedents are cited, the key example is Jesus who articulated an expectation that his followers would fast in Matthew 6:16-18.⁶⁸ According to Apostle Monnakgosi, the purpose of fasting is to “make oneself available to the hand of God, not in order to twist the arm of God”.⁶⁹ It is a spiritual discipline designed to bring the body under control as one obediently submits to the Word of God. At the same time, it is also evident that GM members are certainly expecting to experience more of the power of God and receive answers to their prayers as they fast. During one worship service, four individuals stood and shared testimonies of how God had blessed them with either rewarding employment or excellent educational opportunities after an extended period of prayer and fasting.⁷⁰

For GM, the direct connection between fasting and deliverance ministry is drawn from one of the Gospel narratives. In Mark 9:14-29, Jesus dealt with a difficult situation and explained to his disciples that the reason they could not expel a demon from a young boy was a lack of faith, and the need for prayer and fasting in some exceptional cases.⁷¹ If one wants to experience power in prayer, including receiving revelations and the ability to break bondages, it is necessary to fast regularly. For this reason the church has regularly scheduled three-day periods (usually once every three months) when the entire church is enjoined to fast and pray. Apostle Monnakgosi has indicated

⁶⁸ The passage begins with the words: “When you fast,...”.

⁶⁹ Personal Interview (6 July 2005).

⁷⁰ GM, Francistown (17 February 2002).

⁷¹ This is a good example of the GM reluctance to use newer English translations of the Bible. In the KJV, when the disciples ask Jesus why they could not cast out the demon, Jesus replied, “This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting” (Mk. 9:29). Newer translations note that the manuscript evidence for the words, “and fasting”, is minimal and do not include the addition (e.g., NIV).

how strongly he values fasting with this harsh indictment: “People who don’t fast don’t love the Lord”.⁷²

5.5.3 The Spirit And Words Of Power

5.5.3.1 Words Of Knowledge And Prophecy

One of the most obvious differences between the two church rituals described in this chapter is the almost complete absence of physical objects employed in GM deliverance ministry rituals, with the exception of the occasional use of oil for anointing (following the biblical precedent of Mk. 6:13 and Jm. 5:14). This corresponds to their ambivalence regarding the spiritual power of physical items (#31), with just over half (52%) stating that material objects do not contain power and most of the rest unsure (42%). They instead focus on direct revelation from God, “words of knowledge”, in order to indicate who should come forward for prayer and deliverance. As illustrated above, this usually follows the pattern of naming specific problems, and informing people that God wants to strengthen and deliver them. Most often the difficulty is physical, but it can also be related to struggles in prayer or reading the Bible, dealing with fear, family issues, employment or any other stumbling block to personal success.

This manner of identifying ailments in need of deliverance is viewed as a form of prophecy, and nearly all church members recognize it as such (#24). But Monnakgosi and other leaders also claim to receive special revelation concerning secret details of people’s lives. They are then able to “speak into” these issues, and help people repent and find freedom from the forces that bind them.⁷³ Although this prophetic ministry is usually the prerogative of those leading the service, at times the congregation may also be asked to participate (as in the example above). Earlier, I purposely highlighted the important role played by the GM congregation during deliverance ministry because they can easily be overlooked due of the attention given to the main speaker, especially if

⁷² Personal Interview (6 July 2005).

⁷³ Personal Interview (6 October 2003).

Apostle Monnakgosi is leading. Leaders are expected to set an example in lifestyle, as well as to project an image of calm assurance that God is working powerfully in their lives.⁷⁴

It is important to note that not all deliverance ministry at GM takes place in the congregational setting. At times the person may meet privately with leadership prior to or following a large group meeting. Whether in the congregational or small group setting, the person needs to understand salvation – the need to be “born again”. They are led in a prayer of repentance, and then leaders pray for them, casting out demons. They have identified four steps: 1) acknowledge the Lord Jesus as Lord and Saviour; 2) denounce every spirit that has been in control – break all previous covenants; 3) acknowledge that the person is entering into a new covenant with the Lord; and 4) declare that he or she is delivered by the power of God.⁷⁵ The emphasis on covenant-breaking and renewal is discussed in much greater detail in Chapter Six.

5.5.3.2 Word Pictures As Symbols Of Power

Although GM rituals employ few physical symbols, they are rich in short, biblical phrases that are pregnant with meaning, and able to summon up significant spiritual power for those who have faith. The three key epithets (name of Jesus, blood of Jesus, and fire of God) are all featured in a prayer for the protection of a young man travelling to Italy:

We surrender him totally and completely into your hands, Oh King of Glory, in the mighty name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Lord God. Daddy, we plead the blood of Jesus upon his life, upon every transport that he shall use, Oh God, in the mighty name of Jesus. Lord, we stand against all the plans of the enemy in Jesus' holy and precious name. We say, “Devil, the blood of Jesus is against you, the blood is against you, the blood of Jesus is against you in Jesus' holy and precious name”. Lord God, we thank you, Lord Jehovah, that he is blessed on

⁷⁴ D.D. Monnakgosi, Personal Interview (7 May 2002). “When people see you are spiritually protected, then they have confidence you can help them”. The role of charismatic leadership within NPCs has been highlighted by many scholars (De Haes 1992:84; Buijs 1995:92-93; Ojo 1995:115; Coleman 2000:121,135).

⁷⁵ A. Andreck, Personal Interview (17 June 2005).

his way, that he is blessed in Italy that he is blessed coming back, in Jesus' name.... Oh God, let it be known that there is a God who answereth by fire, that there is a God who is alive forever more, that there is a God of impossibilities.⁷⁶

These “icons and images of the Christ event” (Asamoah-Gyadu 2007:313) draw on the biblical narrative in order to open up a whole new world where the power of God working in Jesus and other faithful biblical figures becomes available to those verbally invoking the Spirit of God.

The first of these word-pictures is the name of Jesus, an almost mantra-like phrase that appears repetitively in all GM prayers. All GM respondents believe it is important to pray in Jesus' name (Appendix 1, #41), with many of them providing the rationale that to do so is a biblical injunction (#42). The connection between “the name of Jesus” and power for answered prayer is explicit for many as they take the words of John 16:23-24 literally.⁷⁷ Another favorite biblical text is Philippians 2:9-11 with its declaration that “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (NIV). The assertion in this text that all will bow before Jesus is especially significant as it indicates to GM members that even Satan and his demons must submit to the “name of Jesus”. When faced with any kind of trouble, believers should call on Jesus' name for to do so is to claim his authority; the name is a symbolic link to Jesus' power.⁷⁸

The second, and closely related, word-picture is the “blood of Jesus”. Symbolic of Jesus' salvific sacrifice and death, GM teaches that his blood both protects and delivers those who avail themselves of its power. Drawing on the Apostle Paul's words

⁷⁶ GM, Gaborone (17 March 2002).

⁷⁷ “In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete” (Jn. 16:23-24, NIV).

⁷⁸ GM, Gaborone (18 June 2005). Kalu (2000b:124) explains how the power of Jesus' name is believed to counteract Satanic powers: “Since incantations are used and curses pronounced, Christians are admonished to also speak the reversal using the name of Jesus, the blood and the resources of the Holy Spirit. As [Walter] Wink said, *onomo*, name is a metonymy, the part representing the whole. The name of Jesus designates his office, dignity and the power of God in him. The text often cited is I John 5:8”.

in Colossians 2:15, Monnakgosi claims that “Satan is scared – he knows what happened at the cross – Jesus stamped on Satan’s neck”.⁷⁹ GM members strongly agree with the teaching of their leaders that no witch or demon can harm them as long as they spiritually arm themselves (#35), with nearly two-thirds (65%) pointing to the “blood of Jesus” as their source of protection (#36). But more than just offering protection, claiming the “blood of Jesus” is believed to bring deliverance and healing as this chorus proclaims:

There’s power in the blood of Jesus,
I’m thankful for the blood of Jesus,
There’s deliverance in the blood of Jesus,
There’s healing in the blood of Jesus.

One can almost detect a magical perspective during a communion service when the congregation is first exhorted to believe that the blood of Jesus is the key to overcoming the enemy (Rev. 12:11), and then instructed to “pray that God will empower you through Jesus’ body and blood”.⁸⁰ The line between a symbolic and magical understanding of this epithet is hard to distinguish at this point.

The third phrase in this triad of powerful word-pictures is the “fire of God”, where the focus turns from Jesus to the Holy Spirit. According to Monnakgosi, the Holy Spirit is always associated with fire in the Bible.⁸¹ Although this is debatable, there are clear connections, such as John the Baptist’s prophecy of one coming to baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (Mt. 3:11), and the Day of Pentecost when tongues of fire rested on the heads of the first followers of Jesus and they were filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:3-4). For GM, the fire of God symbolizes a Spirit-inspired passion for purity (“cleansing fire”), a zealous desire to pray and worship, and white-hot power for battle with spiritual

⁷⁹ GM, Gaborone (3 February 2002). “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col. 2:15, NIV).

⁸⁰ GM, Gaborone (3 February 2002). The imagery can become somewhat extreme, as for example, when praying for standard seven students writing their exams “that their papers and pens will be covered in the blood of Jesus” (12 October 2003).

⁸¹ GM, Gaborone (28 April 2002).

enemies. All the warfare imagery of dynamite, flame-throwers and bombshells coalesce in this one image of releasing the “fire of God” on demonic adversaries.

A young woman provided a sterling example of this image in relation to deliverance ministry. One Sunday morning, she related how she had experienced the “fire of God” after being prayed for by the Apostle. She claimed the fire touched her and spread throughout her home. Prior to this powerful prayer, her eight year-old son had been controlled by three women who had bewitched him so that he would try to stab his mother with a sharp object. But after the deliverance prayer, he could not do so because of the fire, and he too was set free. She concluded with a powerful endorsement: “The Apostle D.D. Monnakgosi goes with fire, and the fire is given to all who want it!”⁸² As with the other two word pictures, this image is designed to build an expectation of power in the minds of those who hear it invoked.

5.5.3.3 The Word And Faith

The importance of faith, defined as believing in the promises of both the Bible and the words of knowledge spoken by the GM leaders, is critical in the deliverance ritual. The one being delivered must sense within their spirit that the spoken “word of knowledge” directly concerns him or her. Here again we can return to Victor Turner’s discussion of rites of passage and the process of moving from separation to liminality to reaggregation. Upon hearing the word of knowledge, the person needing deliverance steps forward, out of the main body of the congregation, to receive prayer. They literally place themselves in the hands of their leaders and their helpers. The leaders lay hands on them in prayer, others stand behind them to catch them if they fall, and the congregation stretches out their hands towards them to impart the power of the Spirit.

The experience of standing in the ritual space between their leaders and the rest of the congregation is sacred, for within it the possibility of a fresh beginning filled with freedom and hope exists. The highly charged atmosphere, filled with music, prayer,

⁸² GM, Gaborone (22 June 2003).

speaking in tongues, people falling to the ground and even shrieking or laughing uncontrollably, leads to a belief that the Holy Spirit is present in power. But for this experience to arrive at the desired outcome of deliverance and a new life, one must express faith in the words being spoken. There is an expectation that speaking the words releases the power: “In Jesus’ name, we release God’s power and anointing upon the child of God. May the power come down right now!”⁸³ Even though the person may not see immediate results, they are expected to believe that the miracle announced has already taken place.

As discussed in Chapter Four (4.4.3.2), verbal testimony, or a positive confession of the promises of Scripture, is vitally important for experiencing deliverance and spiritual victory. Numerous Scripture passages are adduced in support of this doctrine but two favorites are Hebrews 11:6, with its warning that “without faith it is impossible to please God” and the promise that “he rewards those who earnestly seek him”. Another is I John 5:4 with the promise that all those born of God overcome the world, and its concluding assertion: “This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (NIV). In every service, the congregation is exhorted to make verbal declarations to one another such as “Victory is mine”, “No defeat for a child of God”, and “By the stripes of Jesus, I’ve been healed”. The importance of verbal declarations of biblical promises is underscored by this exhortation from a deliverance session: “When I am weak, then I am strong. You will say greater is he that is in me than he who is in the situation. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, for nothing is impossible for me because of the power of God”.⁸⁴ The Questionnaire respondents verified this doctrine by their unanimous agreement with the statement that one must “verbally confess the promises of God so that you may be blessed or healed” (#66).

The key to deliverance and healing is to eliminate doubt for if one begins to question God’s work in their life, he or she can easily lose their “miracle”. Those

⁸³ GM, Gaborone (26 January 2003).

⁸⁴ GM, Gaborone (28 April 2002). Note the partial quotations of various biblical texts (2 Cor. 12:10b; 1 Jn. 4:4; Phil. 4:13; and Lk. 1:37).

seeking deliverance are enjoined to “claim your miracle, receive it, don’t lose it. Praise God from now on for your healing. Speak in faith even if you don’t see the results immediately. If you expect something from the Lord then speak like you are expecting something.”⁸⁵ Apostle Monnakgosi gave the example of a young woman with a heart ailment. She was prayed for and was improving but then began to express doubt, and her condition deteriorated. He likened it to the situation described by Jesus in Luke 11:24-26 where an evil spirit comes out of a person, and then returns with seven more spirits to wreak havoc. If a person doubts, they will lose their victorious deliverance, and their situation may actually be worse than it was previously.⁸⁶

The final stage in the deliverance ministry ritual is re-aggregation, or rejoining the congregation. For GM members, this is more than just a one-time event, as it becomes important for them to attend services, Bible studies and prayer meetings on a regular basis. Especially for those who have been delivered, it is critical to maintain connections with those who will build up their faith with positive affirmations of God’s work in their lives. One may even have to break relationships with those who may encourage a person to doubt what has taken place; their words are often interpreted as a curse from the devil.

5.5.4 Summary

With their “spiritual warfare” ideology, GM teaches that relief from disease does not require treatment, but rather expulsion through powerful symbolic words that draw on the power of God. They expect that any problem can be exorcised immediately through prayer and worship because GM members have the Holy Spirit working in and through them. This thinking is reflected by Apostle Monnakgosi when he challenged his

⁸⁵ GM, Gaborone (24 April 2002). Gopolang Botsie (Personal Interview, 10 February 2003) shared that he had been waking at 4:00 am with headaches, pain and dizziness. In order to experience victory, he knew that he needed to accept that he been healed, and agree with God that it had happened. “It is powerful to speak it out as it shames the devil”.

⁸⁶ D.D. Monnakgosi, Personal Interview (12 July 2007).

congregation to confess corporately, “There is no demon of sickness in my home, no demon of misfortune in my home!”⁸⁷ Once an obstacle is disclosed through prophetic revelation (“words of knowledge”), church leaders “release the power of the Spirit” in order to rebuke and cast out the evil spirit through prayer (accompanied by speaking in tongues). Unlike the HC, deliverance ministry at GM is a much more “word-based” or “verbal” ritual, with almost no physical symbols beyond the laying on of hands and the occasional use of anointing oil. But in order to benefit from this theological framework, one needs to commit fully in faith, for doubt is a sure way to remain mired in problems, unable to experience “breakthroughs” into the abundant life.

5.6 Conclusion

The accounts presented in this chapter of HC healing practices along with GM deliverance ministry illustrate significant differences and similarities between the “worlds of the Spirit” propounded by these two groups. Although both churches are concerned with alleviating disease and empowering their followers to live well, their adoption and adaptation of numerous beliefs, rituals and technologies drawn from both Setswana and Western sources has led them in quite different directions. One of the first issues to note is their highly divergent views of God in relation to disease. Whereas the HC believes that God, as the definitive origin of all things created, ultimately controls and even “uses” disease and Satan for his own ends and purposes, GM teaches that disease and the devil are evil and have no connection whatsoever with a good and powerful God. These differing perspectives significantly impact their healing and deliverance rituals, as the HC relies on prophetic revelation to uncover the hidden causes of disease and discover what God is teaching his children through their ordeal. However, in GM, once God reveals a problem through prophetic “words of knowledge”, the goal is to expel the spirit so that the person can progress into a positive future.

⁸⁷ GM, Gaborone (3 February 2002).

Key similarities and differences in ideology also emerge when considering the use of symbolic ritual in these churches as a means to build social bonds and deal with changing contexts. One of the powerful aspects of ritual and symbolism is its capacity to point backward and forward at the same time, and provide a link between cultures as it incorporates new forms and meaning. The use of both physical and verbal symbols as “tactics” enables each movement to exercise agentic power in relation to the primary ideologies in the Botswana context. Both groups are concerned with removing the causes of disease, whether they interpret its source as sinful behaviours and attitudes or as evil spirits, but their methods diverge significantly. The HC tends to draw on potent symbols familiar from the Setswana past to purge disease by means of emetics, or “wash off” pollution and evil from the body with water. GM, on the other hand, rejects the use of material objects and expels evil spirits and disease by means of powerful “word-symbols” drawn from the Bible and Western forms of Pentecostalism.

A similar dynamic is at work in their protective rituals, as the HC employs numerous physical objects as symbols of spiritual power; whereas in GM, the focus is on the words spoken, especially the “name of Jesus”, “the blood of Jesus” and “the fire of God” as well as speaking in tongues. These are obvious attempts to draw upon the perceived resources of power available to them. In the HC, there is a definite inclination towards the Setswana world, while GM leans toward Western symbols of power. In addition, for both groups, prayer, fasting and especially faith are highly important. In GM, belief in the promises of God as found in the Bible is paramount, for doubt may result in the return of the problem or sickness, with perhaps worse consequences than previously experienced. The use of physical symbols within the HC is intended to stimulate the necessary faith to believe that God has revealed the cause of their problem to the prophets and that the prescribed treatments will have the intended effect. Once again, one finds that while the language is similar, there are significant contrasts between the groups due to their tendencies to promote their own distinct ideologies of power.

One highly significant difference between the churches not yet noted is the role played by ancestors and angels within their ideologies. In some ways, this really is the crux of the matter as here one gains a close look at their highly divergent approaches to the ideologies promoted by the Setswana world and Western culture. Through their incorporation of the ancestors into the HC ideology, it appears that they continue to produce a “hidden transcript” that closely resembles the tactics employed by those championing a Setswana understanding of the world. GM, on the hand, adopts a very different tactic and instead demonizes the ancestors and calls for a radical break with that aspect of the Setswana world. This is one of the primary topics of the following chapter, where the issue of past covenants needs to be reconciled with a vision of life and prosperity for the future.

CHAPTER SIX

CULTURE AND COVENANTS

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapters dealing with identity formation, hermeneutics and approaches to disease and misfortune have laid the groundwork for a closer analysis of the ASC and NPC approaches to cultures, both reified Setswana tradition and modern Western. This highly contentious issue stands at the center of the conflict between these two groups, as NPCs accuse ASCs of practicing demonic rites patterned after a traditional spirituality, and ASCs charge NPCs with selling out to the West and rejecting their African identity. A key question is to what degree can their approaches be viewed as accommodation, rejection or selective modification of and adaption to these cultural forces? Here we are touching on the missiological concern for what has come to be known as contextualization, inculturation or indigenization of the gospel. The purpose of this chapter is to examine closely some of the more controversial practices and beliefs found in both types of churches in order to highlight the reasons for their profound distrust of one another.

At one time there was considerable debate among Western commentators concerning the “Christian identity” of ASCs (e.g., Sundkler 1961:297; Oosthuizen 1968:xi). Their willingness to embrace many features of African traditional spirituality led some to accuse them of syncretism and heresy. While that controversy has subsided among academics, almost everyone would agree that ASCs have shown a remarkable ability to synthesize Christianity with traditional values, signs, symbols and rites. But ASCs are not simply an African form of Christianity; they have also been forced to come to terms with the powerful hegemonic forces of Western culture. In this process, they have not simply retreated into their own cultural enclave but creatively and critically sought to establish their own path or ideology. As Venter (1998:433) argues: “AICs emerged during the late colonial period (1880-1925) as an African

initiative to span the rural/urban, African/Western, local (African) and global (Western) continuums generated by the process of globalization” (also Jules-Rosette 1989). That they have tended to lean toward the local (Setswana) end of the continuum is clear but not unequivocal.

NPCs, on the other hand, have been viewed as vigorously opposed to traditional African spirituality, but willing to adopt uncritically the Western ideals of progress and prosperity. This perspective suggests that NPCs have superimposed an imported dualistic, God-Satan, theology-ideology onto their map of the universe as their way of negotiating the dangerous terrain of the “traditional-modern” continuum. “This dualized cosmos constructs the two categories of ‘paganism’ and ‘tradition,’ and Christianity becomes a condition for people to move from one socio-religiously defined category to another” (Merz 2008:209; also Meyer 1998a). Conversion demands that one adopt a morally polarized worldview where the past is evil and progress into the future is good. Therefore the process of being “born again” becomes, in effect, a choice to become modern, while at the same time rejecting that reified set of beliefs and practices defined as “tradition”.

There appears to be some merit in the analysis offered above but the reality is most likely more nuanced, as it appears that NPCs selectively choose from both local and foreign resources in their quest to establish their new identity. As Ruth Marshall-Fratani (1998:291) puts it: “Thus while pentecostalism is resolutely ‘modern’ and ‘transcultural,’ it does not find its success through wholesale *rejection* of the past, but through an engagement with it; refashioning history and domesticating it at the same time”. Her qualification of the NPC approach to the past suggests that it is more accurate to speak of a reshaping or redefining process, instead of outright rejection. By incorporating aspects of the past into a new framework, NPCs encourage their followers to feel protected from evil while also exploring the new possibilities offered by urbanization, higher education, globalization and modernization.

As discussed in Chapter Three (3.2), worldview formation is critical for enabling church communities to establish their place and identity in the world. One of the first commentators on the new Pentecostals, Matthews Ojo (1988:189), has long argued that NPCs have combined traditional beliefs and an “appropriated foreign spirituality” in an attempt “to create a new cosmology”. Andrew Walls (1996a) also turned to “worldview” language in his attempt to explain the serious antagonism that exists between ASCs and NPCs. He begins by arguing that all forms of Christianity have no choice but to be placed upon the existing African map of the universe. “Christianity has thus necessarily inherited all the old goals of religion; in particular, the association with protection and with power is undiminished” (:5). He then suggests that ASCs and NPCs are using the same maps or worldview; it is just that “they color them differently” (:9). While this is a rather soothing explanation, one wonders if it does justice to the deep hostility that often exists between the groups.

In an attempt to penetrate deeper into this rift, this chapter will focus specifically on a few of the more divisive aspects in this discussion concerning culture and covenants. My research has indicated that the ASC willingness to conduct animal sacrifices, consult with ancestral spirits and make use of traditional medicine has led NPCs to go so far as to label them “churches of demons” (*dikereke tsa mademone*). Arguing that these rites are a continuation of covenants made with the devil, NPCs demand that “born again” believers sever all compacts made in the past. At the same time, the NPC fixation on power, prosperity and progress has led ASCs to deride them as cultural traitors who have rejected their Setswana identity and become “churches of the foreigners” (*dikereke tsa makwerekwere*).¹ In the discussion which follows, I will seek to verify the validity of these claims, as well as highlight the nuances present within the positions held by both types of churches. I will begin with a brief discussion of scholarly opinion of these various practices and beliefs, and then move directly into a description and analysis of what actually takes place within these churches.

¹ Pastor Alfred Onneng (Personal Interview, 15 June 2005) of RBP put it this way: “The English-speaking churches (*dikereke tsa sekgoa*) repudiate things pertaining to Setswana culture but they encourage people to accept their [Western] culture”.

6.2 Ancestors And Covenants

6.2.1 ASCs And Ancestors

Some of those who have studied ASCs over a considerable length of time have argued that these churches have repudiated or replaced their traditional beliefs in the efficacy of ancestral spirits and traditional forms of medicine with their focus on the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit (Daneel 1983:80-93; 1984:67-71; Nthamburi & Waruta 1997:51). Allan Anderson (2000c:216) goes so far as to provide this definitive statement:

In these churches the ancestors are confronted as demons from which the people need deliverance. The *tokoloshe* and other evil spirits are exorcised in the name of Jesus Christ. The diviners are sometimes exposed as charlatans who rob people of their substance and bring them into further bondage to evil spirits and fear.

It is surprising, then, that his own research reveals numerous examples of ASC participation and support for rituals involving the ancestors, the existence of traditional doctors who also serve as ASC prophets, the co-mingling of revelations from the Spirit and ancestral spirits, and the acceptance of ancestral possession as a positive phenomenon (2000c:208-215).² The evidence among ASCs for active belief in ancestral spirits along with regular involvement in traditional rituals has long been established in various locations throughout southern Africa (Sundkler 1961:250; M West 1975:171-189; Pretorius 2004:160-161).

The concern to downplay the continued vitality of ancestor beliefs within ASCs may stem from a desire to protect these churches from an accusation of “ancestor worship” as opposed to “ancestor veneration or respect”. The missionary identification of ancestral spirits with biblical demons has continued to make its presence felt, and clearly lies at the center of the dispute between ASCs and NPCs. ASC leaders N.H.

² In an article dealing with ASCs and the ancestor cult, Anderson concludes (1993:38): “For a significant minority in these churches, the ancestors still played an important role, and they were to be respected and obeyed. They were seen as mediators of God, who sometimes revealed the will of God to people, and who sometimes inspired the prophets. Whether seen as angels, witnesses in heaven, or mediators between people and God, the traditional function of the ancestors as the protectors and benefactors of their progeny was preserved by those who held this view”.

Ngada and K.E. Mofokeng (2001:29) categorically state that “we do not **worship** our ancestors; we **respect** our ancestors in the same way we respect, honour and revere our living parents (*emphasis in original*)”. Closely tied to this subject, of course, are prayers to the dead and the continued practice of traditional rites like animal sacrifices. Are these a form of worship, or merely a way to strengthen and maintain relationships between the living and their deceased family members (*ala* Becken 1993:336)?

Beliefs surrounding ancestors (*badimo*) may well serve as an excellent example of what Scott (1990) referred to as a “hidden transcript” (see 2.3.2). As Musa Dube (1999b) has so artfully exposed in her discussion of the translation of “evil spirits” as *badimo* in the Setswana Bible, ASCs have been actively defusing a colonial cultural bomb through their creative hermeneutic of the Spirit. As suggested in Chapter Four (4.3.3), ASCs have used the Bible to diagnose disease in a manner similar to that of the traditional healer in an effort to restore and maintain life. That the *badimo* are often believed by ASC members to play an important role in this process cannot be denied. Reading their Bible through a different lens, ancestors are not viewed as evil spirits bent on destruction but as important family members who should be heeded and respected.

The manner in which ASCs have sought to resolve the tension between the traditional Setswana cosmology and the translation of the Bible brought by the missionaries was not overtly subversive but still might be referred to as a “spirituality of resistance” (Mwaura 2004:113). Dube (1999b:56-57) highlights this point:

The AIC’s readers resist the translation that turned *Badimo* into demons and devils in the Setswana Bible, the ‘*sekgoa* narrative’ that constructed Christian and Setswana traditions as opposites. Instead, they perceive the Bible from their own cultural perspectives as a book that diagnoses relationships and promotes the healing of relationships between people and the divine powers.³

³ On one occasion, I asked an ASC leader what she thought about traditional doctors who offered up prayers to the ancestors in the name of Jesus before “throwing the bones”. She saw no problem, and immediately referred to the occasion when Jesus corrected his disciples for trying to stop a man from casting out demons in his name (Mk. 9:38-41). The fascinating feature of this anecdote is that the version of the Setswana Bible she was using (*Baebete e e Boitshupo*) reads that the man was casting out *badimo* (ancestors) in Jesus’ name. Without a thought, she took a passage which, when translated into Setswana, was clearly intended to refer to the *badimo* as demons and turned it into a justification to pray to the *badimo* in Jesus’ name. This is exactly the kind of hermeneutical practice Dube is describing.

The ambiguity surrounding the identity of angels vis-à-vis the ancestors can be viewed in the same light. By adopting biblically sanctioned spiritual beings, some ASCs have found a way to meet their need for mediators between themselves and God (Walls 1996:8). This “tactic” has allowed them to take possession of the Bible, the powerful book of the Europeans, and make it theirs while retaining many traditional beliefs, albeit in an altered form. The conscious employ of imported power in a selective manner strengthens their ideology while allowing them to retain their own identity.

6.2.2 NPCs And Covenants

The ASC discourse concerning covenants (*kgolagano* in Setswana) is relatively restricted with limited references to the biblical old and new covenants, marriage vows and the commitment to uphold the requirements of church membership. In NPC circles, the situation is entirely different with covenant language used on a regular and ongoing basis, for as one BLM member put it, “Everything is covenant based”.⁴ Drawn from the Old Testament idea of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel, NPCs argue that all relationships between humans and spiritual beings or forces are founded upon covenantal agreements which promise to ensure fertility, health and protection (Kalu 1998:9; Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:176). The foundation for this belief is the dualistic cosmology adopted by NPCs. This ideology argues that our present reality (what we see and experience) is actually heavily influenced by forces from an unseen, spiritual reality. Within the spiritual sphere, another cosmic dualism is enacted in the conflict between God, who is entirely good, and Satan, who is the personification of evil (Wessels 1997:364; Ellis & ter Haar 1998:186). Covenants enter the discussion inasmuch as various traditional rituals (“primal covenants”) are believed to place one under the devil’s power, necessitating deliverance and re-covenanting with God.

⁴ M. Mokgwathise, Personal Interview (8 May 2002).

The “born again” experience is so critical for NPCs precisely because of the need to repent, break primal covenant ties, and enter a new relationship with God. “Once this fundamental choice has been made, the convert’s life becomes both transparent and comprehensible” (Droogers 2001:46). This process of “power encounter” can only happen through the work of the Holy Spirit who releases one from the reign of Satan, flows into the new believer and infuses their entire being with spiritual energy. Kalu (2000a:138) is once again helpful at this point: “The covenant perspective produces a jaundiced perception of primal culture as the arena of a battle of covenants. Conversion to Christianity and victory in that battle requires that a Christian must exchange primal covenants for a new one with Jesus Christ”. Having been delivered from previous covenants, NPC members have a responsibility to maintain a safe distance from Satan’s clutches by withdrawing from traditional rites and festivals, and seeking fellowship with other “born again” believers.

As one would expect, this ideology has proven to be especially dramatic in its relationship to beliefs concerning the ancestors, witchcraft and traditional medicine. Even though mainstream mission Christianity had attempted to demonize the ancestors through vernacular Bible translations, in reality most Western mission efforts actually exercised a secularizing influence over key elements of the African cosmology. What NPCs have done is take the older view to its natural conclusion and “diabolized” not just those practices that were clearly evil (e.g., witchcraft) but also all beliefs and ritual activities involving ancestor veneration and protection (Van Dijk 2001:220-221; Merz 2008:207-212). However, the linkage of the “past” with Satan is not merely a simple rejection of African tradition, because “through the image of the Devil, old spirits and deities are integrated into the Protestant universe of discourse as ‘Christian’ demons” (Meyer 1998b:322). In this new ideology, all the activities related to the ancestors are regarded as demonic, and since so many traditional rites concerning birth, marriage and death have ancestral connections, all must be avoided, often leading to serious conflict and even rupture within families and communities (Meyer 1998b:329, 338; Van Dijk 1992a & 1992b).

The issue of covenants is not restricted to the acts or commitments of an individual as NPCs believe the activities of one's parents and grandparents can have disastrous consequences. Sins committed in the past, ancestral curses, involvement in witchcraft or sorcery may all be passed along to one's descendants and wreak havoc in their lives (Marshall-Fratani 1998:287). "According to Pentecostal ideology, these ancestral curses result from blood covenants that have been established in the past by devilish powers" (Van Dijk 2001:225). Only through deliverance ministry, where one is empowered to "make a complete break with the past" (Meyer 1998b), can NPC followers break free from these debilitating bondages to the devil and his forces.

Ogbu Kalu (2000a:132-139) has argued that the covenantal perspective has become the primary arena of conflict between NPCs and ASCs because some ASCs have yet to make a break with the primal covenants of their traditional past. "This involves deliverance from, and vigilance against, the wiles of the enemy, the *kosmetikos* and pollution by primal covenanting, and covenant renewal" (:138). ASC willingness to allow members to participate in traditional rites, obey ancestral instructions and the somewhat secretive nature of their rituals indicates an unwillingness to disassociate completely from spiritual forces deemed demonic. Even though ASC members profess faith in Christ, many NPC members still believe that ASCs "have made a pact with the occult and demonic" (Onyinah 2007:313). This is the arena where the two ideologies, or "worlds of the Spirit", differ most starkly. In the discussion to follow I have analyzed the tactical employ of claims and practices by both types of churches in order to determine how they seek to create a powerful self-identity in relation to the competing ideologies surrounding them.

6.3 Hermon Church And Goodnews Ministries Approaches To Setswana

6.3.1 HC Tactics In Relation To Setswana

6.3.1.1 Sacrifices

Chapter Five (5.4.4.4) contained a short discussion of the role sacrifices play in the HC approach to restoring health and well-being in the lives of their members. At

that point it was noted that they follow both Setswana and Old Testament precedent in continuing to sacrifice animals such as sheep, goats and cattle. They also unabashedly admit to offering prayers to both Jesus and the ancestral spirits of those seeking assistance. They do this because “the church believes that ancestral spirits exist and that they can have good or bad effect among the people of the church” (Amanze 1994:133). I will begin by providing two accounts of sacrifices conducted by the HC, and then provide an analysis of what these rituals along with other data reveal about their beliefs concerning certain activities believed to constitute Setswana tradition.

The first account is a brief description of a sacrifice that places minimal emphasis on the ancestors, although their assistance was still requested in all earnestness. On one occasion, upon arrival on the HC headquarters in Sefophe the Archbishop took me on a brief tour of the compound and indicated that I should examine the new altar (*sebeso*)⁵ they had constructed for special events. Just one day earlier, the church had gathered to support a woman defrauded of a substantial amount of money (P10,000.00) by a man she thought loved her. The church spent the entire night praying to God and asking her ancestors for help in locating the thief and restoring the stolen funds. A significant portion of the church event had consisted of sacrificing a goat according to the pattern laid out in Leviticus 3:3-5. The very next day the police managed to find and apprehend the thief, and most of her money was returned immediately. Church members were naturally extremely excited about this rapid and powerful response to their prayers. According to HC leaders, this type of sacrifice is intended to encourage church members to pray earnestly, giving thanks in advance for the answer God will provide.⁶ This description immediately raises questions concerning offering prayers to ancestors, as well as replicating Old Testament sacrificial rites.

The second type of sacrifice is performed annually near the end of October or beginning of November at the church compound and the adjacent home of the

⁵ From the verb, “*go besa*” (to put into the fire to cook), the noun, *sebeso*, refers to a place of cooking or burning.

⁶ J Madimabe, Personal Interview (7 July 2007).

Archbishop.⁷ The Archbishop hosts the event over a weekend for the entire church in order to conduct a special service for “the sick” (*balwetse*). The all-night healing/restoration ritual combines both the sacrifice of a head of cattle and a grain offering (*matlhabelo* and *magobe*).⁸ The event begins late in the evening with a service not unlike many Sunday morning worship services at the HC, including singing, preaching and a considerable amount of time spent in prayer and the “wheel dance”. On this occasion, the sermon text was John 15:1-5 and the messages focused on the need to unify in Christ through love. Based on the text, the Archbishop reminded the congregation that they are a part of God’s plant or vine (*setlhare*), “but no branch can bear fruit if love is not present. Let us join together in one spirit so that we may trample all earthly things under our feet, and conquer them through love. If you have love you will receive blessings (*masego*) and prosperity (*matlhogonolo*)”. Clearly this event was intended to foster a sense of community solidarity.

Following a lengthy session of prayer and the “wheel dance”, the worshippers were admonished to leave their sinful “old self” behind as they went out singing into the courtyard to participate in the sacrifice and grain offering. It was very dark (around 2:30 AM), and all were given a candle as a symbol of the light of the Spirit. The altar, a cross-shaped structure constructed of rock and concrete, had been prepared with firewood and candles. Two large whitish stones, with crystalline protrusions, were placed on the eastern side of the altar, along with a large bowl containing blood (*madl*), fat (*lemipi*) and kidneys (*diphilo*) from the slaughtered cow provided by the Archbishop. There was also a much larger bowl full of sorghum flour (contributed by members of the church) resting next to the altar, along with a clay pot full of water. Four prominent HC leaders stood at each extension of the altar enthusiastically leading the congregation in song.

⁷ This description is drawn from the weekend of 1-2 November 2003, although I had attended the same celebration on two previous occasions as well.

⁸ Both of terms are plural forms. *Matlhabelo* (sing., *setlhabelo*) literally refers to a “stabbing” or “slaughtering”, and *magobe* (sing., *bogobe*) is Setswana for sorghum porridge, the staple food eaten by most Batswana. The plural form is used by various churches to refer to the “grain offering” ritual described within.

As an introduction, the story of God's provision to Abraham of an alternative sacrifice for Isaac was read (Gen. 22), and then the congregation sang a variety of choruses, including *Jesu, ke na nae* ("Jesus, I am with him") and *Ke Morena Jesu yo o re dumeletseng* ("It is the Lord Jesus whom we believe in"). Then the congregation began to sing the familiar hymn, '*Mele, Pelo le Moea* ("Body, Heart and Spirit") from *Lifela tsa Sione* (#374), while the Archbishop prayed loudly for God to sanctify the ritual, and dispatch his angels to bless those gathered there. The words of this hymn are significant:

<i>'Mele, pelo, le moea, - Botho kaofela,</i>	Body, heart and spirit, my whole being
<i>Ke u beela tsona, - Ke li tella uena.</i>	I save them for you, I give them to you.
<i>E, sehlabelo sa ka – Ke 'na ka sebele;</i>	It is my sacrifice – It is all that I am;
<i>Jesu, Morena a ka, - U se amohele!</i>	Jesus, my Lord, please accept it! ⁹

Similar to the discussion in Chapter Four (see 4.3.3.2) of hymn #12 in *Lifela tsa Sione*, one can see a subtle re-working of the original intent of this hymn so that it suits the purposes of the HC ideology, as opposed to a more narrow Western interpretation. No longer is it just a hymn about self-sacrifice. Now it serves as a powerful reinforcement of deeply held cultural values.

Once the hymn had been repeated in its entirety a number of times, the church secretary was instructed to read the text from Leviticus 3:3-5 for the worshippers.¹⁰ She knelt in the dust to read, while the Archbishop loudly and dramatically repeated the biblical phrases in a somewhat choreographed performance. Then the story of Elijah and the false prophets of Baal was read (I Ki. 18:30-36), and also partially re-enacted as buckets full of water were brought to the altar and poured along the sides and all around the base (but not onto the firewood). Upon completion of that task, the Archbishop

⁹ The importance of this hymn for ASC sacrifices can hardly be overestimated as I have heard it sung repeatedly at the dozen or more ASC ritual burnt offerings I have attended (representing six different denominations in Botswana and Lesotho).

¹⁰ The text reads: "From the fellowship offering he is to bring a sacrifice (*tlhabelo ya ditshupelo*) made to the LORD by fire: all the fat (*lomipi*) that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, both kidneys (*diphilo*) with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys. Then Aaron's sons are to burn it on the altar (*sebeso*) on top of the burnt offering that is on the burning wood, as an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD" (NIV).

stepped forward, lit the kindling at the base of the altar, and the congregation immediately began a slow circular shuffle dance while singing the following chorus for the next hour: *Re fumane matlhogonolo; kaofela, Morena o re thuse* (Please provide us with blessings/favours; With all things, Lord, please help us). In many ways, this short refrain characterizes the purpose of the ritual.

While the congregation sang, the Archbishop danced around the fire stirring it up with his arms and his staff, and church members threw their candles onto the blazing firewood. Soon after, church leaders took the fat and kidneys from the bowl, held them high in the air and before placing them into the fire, they prayed loudly, asking for the God of Madimabe to provide them with favour for life. Once the animal entrails were consumed by the fire, the ritual progressed into the “grain offering” (*magobe*).¹¹ At that point, Leviticus 2:11-16 was read, and the leaders took several handfuls of sorghum flour and cast it into the fire while the Archbishop poured oil onto the altar.¹² The effect was rather dramatic as the flames soared upward, and the earnest faces of the worshippers were illuminated in the darkness. As the people began to move more quickly around the offering, the church secretary read prayer requests that had been written out on small pieces of paper (e.g., good marriage partners; employment, fruitful harvest, successful exam results). Once read, HC members took the notes and added them to the fire.

¹¹ According to A. Onneng (Personal Interview, 1 June 2005), two significant differences between the HC and RBP rituals are that RBP no longer conducts an animal sacrifice in conjunction with *magobe* (although this was done in the past), and they choose to focus on the Passover instructions (Deut. 16:1-5) instead of the text in Leviticus. The RBP ritual is conducted in the month of August and is intended to remember and give thanks for the prophetic call on the life of the original founder of the RBP, as well as to give thanks for the religious freedom enjoyed by Botswana on account of the efforts by the first President of the country, Sir Seretse Khama.

¹² The text reads: “Every grain offering you bring to the LORD must be made without yeast, for you are not to burn any yeast or honey in an offering made to the LORD by fire. You may bring them to the LORD as an offering of the firstfruits, but they are not to be offered on the altar as a pleasing aroma. Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings. If you bring a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, offer crushed heads of new grain roasted in the fire. Put oil and incense on it; it is a grain offering. The priest shall burn the memorial portion of the crushed grain and the oil, together with all the incense, as an offering made to the LORD by fire” (NIV).

Stressing the communal nature of the event, the congregation was enjoined to take handfuls of flour and throw it onto the flames. They were told, “Go to the fire and ask God for what you need”. At this point the singing and dancing became rather frenetic and one could hear prayers offered to the God of Madimabe, Jesus and the ancestors. Even though it was quite warm, as they circled the altar everyone held out their hands to the glowing flames in what appeared to be an effort to experience tangibly the spiritual power signified by the burnt offering. At one point the Archbishop took hold of the rocks that had been placed on the side of the altar, held each one high above his head and prayed loudly that the church would have spiritual power that could not be broken – “that they would be solid like a rock, and have power to stand firm in love”.¹³ He then replaced the rocks, stirred the fire with his staff, and encouraged the congregation to continue to pray for God’s provision of blessings and healing. That HC members took this event seriously was extremely evident from their energetic participation in the ritual which finally concluded after eating the meat from the slaughtered cow at nearly 5:00 AM. As a postscript to this event, the next morning two large black plastic barrels filled with traditional beer (*bojalwa jwa Setswana*) were produced, blessed and then shared with church members and other people from the village. A cupful was poured onto the ground as a libation to the ancestors and then all drank heartily.

6.3.1.2 Analysis Of Sacrifices

Providing a full commentary on all components of the two sacrifices described above would require one to write a small book. Nevertheless, I do believe that it will be helpful to note some key aspects of these events in relation to how the HC has rejected,

¹³ When asked later, he told me that he had felt led of the Spirit to perform this act. He also had prayed that the rocks would have spiritual power so that in the future if someone had a problem, they could go to the altar, take hold of the rocks, and pray, asking for God’s help. Walls (1996:10) comments on a similar example where an ASC prophet employed a stone in his rituals: “The ‘spiritual’ churches may offer the divine power mediated through holy water or some other substance, or demonstrate that power in exorcism by a blow on the afflicted head from the Bible; but again it is crucial to their identity that it is God’s power that is mediated, God’s Book that is used in the mediation”.

added to, retained and modified significant elements of traditional rituals.¹⁴ As stressed by Archbishop Madimabe, one of the most important things to understand is that traditional healers (*dingaka*) have no part to play in their proceedings as they have been replaced by the Archbishop and his prophets.¹⁵ Furthermore, traditional drumming and music has been replaced with both a new style and Christian lyrics.¹⁶ In addition, participants in HC sacrifices represent a new community, the church, which may include one's earthly relatives but more importantly consists of the spiritual family of God. Finally, while the ancestors are acknowledged in these events by means of requests, the focus is on the biblical God, Jesus and the Spirit.

Concerning the issue of additions to the traditional rituals, there are ample examples: deliberate attempts to replicate the instructions found in the Levitical texts, Christian hymns and choruses, prayers (especially recitation of the Lord's Prayer), the introduction of sorghum offerings (*magobe*), and the element of writing out prayer requests on paper and then burning them. Certain elements of the tradition have been maintained including the performance of the ritual at night, the slaughter and consumption of a cow, requests made to the ancestors, the use of physical objects that are believed to mediate spiritual power, the provision of traditional beer and the libation to the ancestors. Even a cursory consideration of these rituals reveals the profound level of integration that has occurred in the HC effort to create an ideology that harmonizes their Christian commitment with Setswana spirituality. In the words of one HC leader, "In the past people used to participate in the traditional rite of "*go phasa*", but

¹⁴ It is somewhat difficult to obtain descriptions of "traditional" Setswana ceremonies involving the slaughter of cattle, sheep, goats, or chickens as the rites have been heavily influenced by Christianity. An older description in Setswana can be found in Schapera (1938:169-179). Amanze (2002:68-87) provides a helpful overview of the contemporary situation among various Batswana tribal groups.

¹⁵ Personal Interview (14 November 2003).

¹⁶ HC members like to emphasize that they do not "drum like the traditional healers" (*ga re letse meropa jaaka masangoma*).

now they do it according to the Bible". In this way, "our culture and Christian faith join together" (*ngwao ya rona e kopana le tumelo ya Sekeresete*).¹⁷

6.3.1.3 Attitudes Towards The Ancestors

One could legitimately ask what effect the type of rituals described above have on beliefs concerning the ancestors. From the Questionnaire results (Appendix 1), it would appear that HC members still believe strongly in the reality of ancestors as evidenced by their near unanimous conviction (92%) that deceased relatives can communicate with the living (#48). If their ancestors appeared to them in a dream and requested them to do something, 80% of the respondents would obey without question, while another 16% would speak to the church leaders or their relatives about it before obeying (#49). As for conducting traditional rites related to the ancestors (#50), again nearly everyone felt that it was acceptable to participate (96%).¹⁸ Sentswela Madimabe, one of the Archbishop's wives, said simply that when the dead speak with the living, "we instruct the living to obey what their ancestors have told them" (*re ba ruta gore ba utlwe se badimo ba bone ba se bololetseng*).¹⁹ The biblical rationale for this position is also quite well known, as many Questionnaire respondents stated that the charge to "obey your parents" is the most important biblical command (#56).²⁰ Their willingness to continue to maintain relationship with the ancestors is clearly still very strong.

¹⁷ S. Madimabe, Personal Interview (13 November 2003). The HC and RBP biblical rationale for the continuation of sacrifices is extensive. Naturally they draw heavily upon Old Testament precedent but also turn to Jesus' words in Matthew 5:17 where he said that he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it, and then immediately provided an example of someone presenting an offering at the altar (5:23-26). References to "the altar" in Revelation (14:18; 16:7) are also adduced in support of the practice.

¹⁸ The results from RBP were similar although there was a little more ambiguity with 69% claiming that the dead could communicate with the living (#48), and a little over half who would obey instructions from their ancestors (#49). Just 62% continue to participate in traditional sacrificial rites (#50). The church does not officially address the issue, preferring to view it as a family matter.

¹⁹ Personal Interview (13 November 2003).

²⁰ That this command extends beyond the grave was confirmed in informal conversations with a number of HC members and leaders. See Daneel (1987:233) for a similar perspective from Zimbabwe.

Within the Tswapong region of eastern Botswana, there are many who believe that the ancestors reside in the hills that form the most prominent geographical feature in the area. The *badimo* are believed to attend funeral wakes (*ditebelelo*) and communicate messages to the living by means of mediums (*dikomana*) (Amanze 2002:77). The village of Sefophe is located in the north of this area, and thus it is not surprising to hear HC leaders affirm this widely held belief.²¹ The research confirms that the HC continues to include the *badimo* in their cosmology, and yet their position remains somewhat ambiguous. While they continue to perform sacrifices in order to appease the ancestors, or at least to gain their favour, they also encourage their members to break loose from unhealthy ties to their deceased relatives.

An example of this ambiguity is found in the Archbishop's healing ministry. He claims that his primary expertise has to do with treating those who are mentally or emotionally ill. He described their problems in the following manner: "they have been entered" (*ba a tsenwa*),²² or they have a "disease of the head" (*bolwetsi jwa tlhogo*). Or, on occasion, a deceased relative did not die a good death or is unhappy (*ga ba itumele*) for any number of reasons, so they create problems for the living. In Chapter Five (5.4.4.4), the ritual prescribed for these cases was described - they often sacrifice a lamb, cow or goat and encourage the person "to please God, separate from their ancestors and turn/convert to Jesus" (*gore a kgatlhe Modimo, a kgaogane le badimo, a bo a sokologe mo go Jesu*). During this ritual, Leviticus 7:1-7, a text describing a "guilt or atonement offering" is read, and its directives followed. Prayers are offered to both Jesus and the ancestral spirits, requesting Jesus to heal the person, and the ancestors to accept the offering and leave the patient alone (see Amanze 1994:133).²³ Clearly the ancestors are not always viewed in an entirely favourable light, and the Lord Jesus is accorded a much higher position within the HC spiritual hierarchy.

²¹ J. Madimabe, Personal Interview (14 November 2003). The RBP Archbishop T.M. Kapaletswe (Personal Interview, 2 November 2003) stated the same conviction.

²² This expression seems primarily to indicate mental illness, although it may have connotations of being possessed by a spirit (Pauw 1961:207).

²³ Personal Interview (22 September 2003).

This last example raises the question of prayers to the ancestors.²⁴ Here again, there is abundant evidence from the sacrificial rites that HC members make requests of the ancestors. They also boldly request help from biblical ancestors like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, believing they will send angels to assist them.²⁵ Certainly one aspect of this discussion that needs to be taken into consideration is the exact meaning of the Setswana verb for prayer (*go rapela*). In English, the word has become almost a synonym for worship, but in Setswana it refers to making a humble request of someone in authority.²⁶ This would seem to be the spirit in which Archbishop Madimabe takes the idea when he suggests that one “can ask the ancestors for food but only Jesus and the angels can provide blessing (*lesego*)”.²⁷ Although a more nuanced understanding of what it means to pray to the ancestors may satisfy some, this practice still creates tremendous consternation among NPC followers, as does the HC approach to traditional medicine.

6.3.1.4 Approach To Setswana Medicine

At first glance, the HC position with regard to traditional medicine can appear somewhat contradictory. From the testimonies of both the Archbishop and his deputy, Isaak Tsholofelo, one could surmise that they would repudiate the use of Setswana medicines and charms. Both of them mentioned that when they decided to follow Jesus, they discarded the medicines (*melemo*), herbs (*ditlhare*) and charms (*dipheko*) they had in their possession. However, when interviewing them, both of them declared

²⁴ In a most insensitive manner, Becken (1993:336) highlights the issue: “The problem arises when praises and prayers are said to the ancestors; this is offensive to sensible Africans”.

²⁵ S. Madimabe, Personal Interview (13 November 2003). In both HC and RBP, prayers are often offered to the God of the church founder and/or other prominent church leaders, living or dead.

²⁶ In his Setswana dictionary, *Thanodi ya Setswana ya Dikole*, Kgasa (1988) defines the verb, *rapela*, as follows: “*buā ka boikobo le yo o nang le nonofo mo go wena ka mowa wa go kopa boitshwarelo, pabalelo, thuso le gotlhe mo go molemo* (speak with humility to one who has authority over you with a spirit of begging/asking for forgiveness, care, help and all other good things).

²⁷ Personal Interview (14 November 2003). He made this comment when explaining the significance of the grain offering (*magobe*).

that traditional doctors often were helpful for dealing with particular cases. Although they did not state it explicitly, I sensed that the problem with their charms and medicines at the time of their conversion was that they had intended to use them for harmful effect. Therefore, they needed to repent and destroy these symbols of evil from their past.

Vice-Bishop Tsholofelo was straight forward in his appraisal of traditional medicine: "It is all fine (*go siame*) except if someone is using it to bewitch someone else. The key is whether it is life-promoting (*go tshedisa*) or whether it is killing (*go bolaya*)."²⁸ He went on to argue that the traditional practice of "throwing the bones" is not a problem as it can help, and it even has biblical precedent in the stories of Jonah (Jon. 1:7) and the choice of Mathias as a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:23-26).²⁹ Other members of the church concur with this assessment,³⁰ and the presence of traditional doctors along with the paraphernalia associated with traditional medicine in HC services suggests that the church condones the practice.³¹ Although they do not actively encourage their members to become traditional doctors, they recognize that the ancestors still seek to help the community through these individuals.³²

But the Questionnaire (Appendix 1, #52 and 53), along with certain statements by the Archbishop, casts a shadow of doubt on this simple assessment. When asked if there was a difference between the spiritual power of their church and that of a

²⁸ Personal Interview (14 November 2003). This perspective is echoed by John Mbiti (1990:200): "Mystical power is neither good or evil in itself: but when used maliciously by some individuals, it is experienced as evil". From a Ghanaian perspective, Asamoah-Gyadu (2007:311) writes: "[I]n both traditional and indigenous Christian worldviews, evil is anything that destroys lives".

²⁹ In the original Setswana translation of the Bible, *Baebele e e Boitshupo*, the English expression "to cast lots" is translated by the phrase "*go laola ka bola*" ("to throw the bones"; i.e., "to divine").

³⁰ S. Molefe, Personal Interview (17 June 2005). She said: "It is fine to do the work of a traditional doctor as long as they continue to pray". See Harries (2006:158) for a similar perspective from Kenya.

³¹ Boiketlo Ngwako, Personal Interview (13 June 2005), pointed out that in RBP, they permit members to visit traditional doctors, and that one of their senior pastors is also a traditional doctor.

³² Anderson (2006:131-132) discovered the same attitude. South African ASC leaders, Ngada & Mofokeng (2001:35) state it plainly: "When people are possessed by an ancestral spirit they learn, in dreams and visions, many secrets about herbs and medicines and diseases and healing".

traditional doctor, nearly 90% of the respondents answered positively. When asked to describe the difference, the most common response (56%) was that traditional doctors “throw the bones” or use medicines but the HC relies on the Spirit of God and prayer. According to the Archbishop, their church has the “power of Jehovah God” (*nonofo ya Jehofa Modimo*); whereas traditional doctors only rely on the power of people – the deceased ancestors.³³ This still does not resolve the issue, for one can legitimately ask whether the spiritual power is qualifiedly or quantifiably different. In other words, is HC spiritual power different than the power of traditional doctors, or do they just have better access to the same power? While I cannot give a definitive answer to that question, my sense is that their predisposition towards the holistic promotion of life and health, what might be referred to as a *Semoya* perspective, would lead them to answer that both they and traditional doctors are drawing upon the power of God.³⁴

This is not to say that the church promotes traditional medicine; it does not. When discussing the issue of “spiritual disease” (*bolwetse jwa semoya*), and the call to become a traditional healer, Madimabe was adamant that the church seeks to turn people away from traditional medicine so that they serve God alone.³⁵ He seemed to feel that traditional healers are more self-serving, and that they seek to “serve the physical instead of the spiritual” (*ba direla senama bogolo go semoya*). The question of payment for healing is obviously an issue in this context, and his reference to the biblical story of Simon trying to buy spiritual power (Acts 8:18-19) made that obvious. In the case of his own daughter, there was a protracted struggle with the ancestral spirits to release her (and her son) so that she could freely serve as a healer in the church. This daughter, Chigwe, confirmed the Archbishop’s account. She described her

³³ Personal Interview (14 November 2003). It should be noted that he was not denigrating the ancestors, only comparing the relative strength of their spiritual power.

³⁴ In discussions with other members of other ASCs, I have on occasion asked them if they try to discern the difference between the spiritual power of traditional doctors and the power they draw on for healing. One person said to me: “That is a question we never think to ask. If the person is healed, that is a good thing and it must be from God, no matter what the source of power”.

³⁵ Personal Interview (22 September 2003). Chigwe Madimabe (Personal Interview, 13 June 2005) claimed the church clearly teaches that you should not mix the “spirit of *sangomas* (traditional doctors) with the “spirit of the church”.

difficulties in some detail as well as the manner in which the church prayed for her, placed protective cords on her body, and eventually helped her find peace in serving God within the structures designed by the church.³⁶

The HC ambivalence towards traditional medicine is also evident in the way they have taken over many functions normally handled by traditional doctors. As mentioned above, the Archbishop made it clear that traditional doctors play no part in their healing rituals. The church handles these affairs with the aid of the Spirit. The same is true concerning rituals surrounding birth, marriage and funerals. For example, prior to a wedding, the bride and groom meet with the pastor to be prayed for, and then they are given separate baths with “ashes” (*sewacho*) as a protective measure against those who would want to disrupt the marriage. The bereaved are also ritually purified by the church by means of blessed water. Three days following the funeral, they are sprinkled (*go kgatsha*) at home, and then again four days later. They are sprinkled one final time before they enter the church for the first time after the death in order that they might be free from all defilement (Amanze 1994:133).³⁷

Traditional agricultural rites have also been assumed by the church. At the beginning of planting season, instead of seeking out traditional doctors to fortify and protect their crops (Amanze 2002:334-337), church members bring their seeds to the church to be sprinkled with water mixed with *sewacho* (ashes) and blessed by the Archbishop and other pastors (Amanze 1994:133).³⁸ This is also true concerning “prayers for rain”. For example, during a year of drought (April 2005), the church met at the chief’s *kgotla* (courtyard) to pray for rain. Although they initiated the service on their own, soon others from the village joined them, and before long it began to pour down rain. This led people to claim the HC has powerful prayers and now, more than ever,

³⁶ Personal Interviews with C. Madimabe (13 June 2005) and J. Madimabe (22 September 2003).

³⁷ J. Madimabe, Personal Interview (14 November 2003), and S. Madimabe (13 November 2003). The Archbishop said: “Instead of calling the traditional doctor (*ngaka*) to provide protection from witchcraft (*bolob*), the church people come to him and he prays for them and puts them in a ritual bath”.

³⁸ RBP performs a similar rite (Amanze 1994:235).

people in the village “respect the HC” (*batho ba tshaba kereke ya Hermone*).³⁹ The implication from these examples is that the HC has not sought to do battle with traditional medicine so much as to replace it.

6.3.1.5 Tactics – Adaptation And Replacement

The numerous illustrations adduced above all indicate that the HC approach to beliefs and practices stemming from traditional Setswana spirituality is that of retention, replacement and modification. Beliefs concerning the ancestors, witchcraft and the ability of inanimate objects to mediate spiritual power have all been retained. As the Archbishop says, “Setswana culture and the Bible can go together in most things”.⁴⁰ But not in everything, for other key elements such as traditional doctors have largely been removed and replaced by HC prophets and healers. Their guide in this process is the Bible, as interpreted by means of their spiritual hermeneutic. Elements of Setswana practice are adopted and modified significantly under the inspiration of the Spirit, but in this Christianizing process they still believe they are remaining faithful to their indigenous roots. As quoted above (6.3.1.2), they believe that in this way, “Setswana culture and Christianity meet” (*ngwao ya rona e kopana le tumelo ya Sekeresete*).

The HC link to their Setswana culture is neither simple nor total. They have employed a variety of tactics to help them produce an ideology that is highly sympathetic to Setswana tradition, and yet clearly distinct as well. They are proud of their Setswana heritage, and struggle with those churches that denigrate their beliefs so thoroughly. As a group of leaders told me late one night: “We follow our customs and culture (*mekgwa le ngwao ya rona*), not like those in the English-speaking churches”.⁴¹

³⁹ G. Madimabe, Personal Interview (13 June 2005).

⁴⁰ J. Madimabe, Personal Interview (14 November 2003).

⁴¹ HC leaders in Sefophe (7 July 2007). Pastor Boiketlo Ngwako of RBP put it even more strongly: “Our culture is an inheritance” (*Ngwao ke boswa*). We despise them because they don’t like Setswana ways (*Re a ba nyatsa ka gore ga ba rate dilo tsa Setswana*). They refuse to follow culture (*Ba gana ngwao*), and they teach others to leave our culture as well” (Personal Interview, 13 June 2005).

But it is precisely their willingness to follow aspects of Setswana tradition, especially in relation to the ancestors (*badimo*), that has raised the ire of NPCs. When the HC leader, Mmoni Moasi, argues that you cannot refer to *badimo* as demons, and that the only people who do so do not understand the Bible, she is clearly confronting NPC disciples.⁴²

6.3.2 GM Tactics In Relation To Setswana And ASCs

6.3.2.1 Covenant-Breaking Service

In Chapter Five (5.5) the GM ministry of deliverance was described and analyzed in considerable detail. Therefore in the discussion to follow, I will focus attention on just a few remaining issues that are of great import: deliverance as a covenant-breaking ritual, claims that ASCs engage in primal covenants, beliefs concerning Setswana rituals and medicine and the ramifications of the GM approach to Setswana on family relationships. According to GM, demonic covenants include generational curses, spirits of witchcraft, dedication to demons through traditional rites and ASC healing rituals. One can enter these covenants with or without conscious knowledge as it is believed that familial ties can have serious impact in the spiritual realm.⁴³ Some excerpts from a GM covenant-breaking deliverance ritual are provided at the outset to illustrate graphically their beliefs and practice.

Similar to most GM services, prior to the covenant-breaking ritual the congregation had engaged in an extended period of worship, listened to a sermon and then responded to an altar call. Apostle Monnakgosi called on the Spirit of God to minister in power and with miracles, and people flocked forward to make a commitment to follow Jesus, receive the gift of tongues or have specific ailments addressed in prayer. Near the end of this session, a young lady was singled out – the Apostle had been ministering to her for some time, and it was clear that he believed she had a

⁴² Personal Interview (13 June 2005).

⁴³ A. Andreck, Personal Interview (17 June 2005).

significant issue needing attention. He began by explaining that she was a member of a large ASC in the country, and that she had been suffering from spiritual attacks.

Apostle Monnakgosi speaking: “She has been attacked by demons, especially when they sing these songs, you know from *Lifela tsa Sione*. Sometimes I wonder if we should really sing these songs, you know (*laughter*), because these people use them to dedicate people to the devils. My dear, God is going to set you free right now.

Since you are a child of God, the devil has got no right in your life. Do you understand that? Because Jesus is inside of you, not the devil, but Jesus. Say, “Jesus is inside of me”. And God is going to set you free, OK? Praise the name of Jesus.

And it looks also that some bottles [of water] were given to her while she was going to these “spiritism” churches (*dikereke tsa mewa*). And so they say that sometimes they will cast out those demons and the demons will run home to wait for her at home. God is going to set you free, and if they go home, when they see you, they’re going to run for their lives. Praise God.

Because you have given your life to Jesus, you are more powerful than the devil. In the book of Matthew, chapter 11, anyone born of a woman can never be greater than John the Baptist, nevertheless, in the kingdom of heaven, the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than even John the Baptist who was greater than the devil a thousand, million times.

Which songs caused problems? She says the song, *Lona ba ba ratang go phela* (You, who want to live [#200]). Sister, God is delivering you totally today, and you will never go back to those things, OK? And you should never agree to go back to those things. Even if your parents can tell you, “No, we are going to strengthen you with these things”. Say, no I’m already strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says, Honor your father and mother **in the Lord** (*strong emphasis*). That means if it’s something that glorifies Jesus. If it doesn’t glorify Jesus, you’ve got no right to honor them. You’re supposed to refuse – we have all gone through that. We have been threatened to be chased out of homes. We are not disobedient to our parents but we are disobedient to the things of the devil. OK?

Prayer in tongues.

(*Loudly*) Satan, in the name of Jesus, I command you right now to take off your dirty hands and fingers from this temple of the Holy Spirit. And you devils and demons, right now in Jesus’ name I command you to go into the sea in the name of Jesus. I break you power, Satan, upon this life right now. In the name of Jesus, I command you and I tell you never to touch this temple of the Holy Spirit again in the name of Jesus. I prohibit you from this time, henceforth, in the name of Jesus,

never to lay your filthy hands upon this temple of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, I break every devil and devil's power upon this life, and I seal this life with the blood of Jesus, right now, and I seal your life with the mercy of God, with the grace of God, with the love of God with the anointing of God, with the power of God in the name of Jesus, in Jesus' name.

Then Apostle Monnakgosi instructed the young woman to repeat after him: "In the name of Jesus, Satan, I've got no agreement, no covenant, anymore with you. I break every covenant that I ever had with you. Devils, demons, I denounce you, I denounce your work in my life in the name of Jesus. And I cover myself with the blood of Jesus, in the name of Jesus, and the power of God, I plead it upon my life. And the anointing of God, I plead it upon my life. And the chariots of fire, I commission them to go everywhere with me".

At the completion of that prayer, a new woman was introduced who had been bothered in her dreams with visits from her deceased ASC pastor. As he leads this woman in a covenant-breaking prayer, Apostle Monnakgosi makes some interesting statements about the dead.

We are not associated with the dead – we are not to dream about dead people unless maybe it is someone who has gone to heaven. Because that brother is not dead, he's alive. Because in Jesus we don't die, we sleep, and if you dream a sleeping person, it's not wrong. But if you dream someone who is not a Christian, then it's wrong.

(Lift up your right hand, and stretch forth your hands.)

We break the lies and the deceptions of the devil in the name of Jesus, upon this young lady, Christiana. We break the dreams of a dead, unsaved pastor of the (name of the ASC), in the name of Jesus. We cast it (out) in the name of Jesus, you filthy foul devil, go away and never come to her again. Never ever come to her again, in the name of Jesus, in the form of dreams. We bind you and we curse you. Go away forever in the name of Jesus. In the name of Jesus we declare her clean from the top of her head to the very souls of her feet. We call it done and we give you glory in Jesus' name. In Jesus' name, we praise you, Lord.

All these things with bottles and water, you need deliverance from these things. You say, "*Moruti* (Pastor), I'm not using them anymore".⁴⁴

⁴⁴ GM, "Revival Made Alive" (9 September 2001). Accessed 15 June 2005. This cassette recording was provided to me upon my request for information regarding the GM understanding of covenants. Although specific ASCs were mentioned in the ritual, I have removed the names of the churches.

6.3.2.2 Key Elements Of Covenant-Breaking

Although no direct mention is made of Setswana cultural practices in the excerpt above, it will become clear from the following discussion that GM equates ASC signs, symbols and rituals with those of traditional medicine. The citation does, however, highlight a number of features of the GM understanding of covenant-breaking. First, GM teaches that ASCs are actively engaged in a process of establishing spiritual bonds, or covenants, between their members and the demonic forces of Satan. Music, hymns from *Lifela tsa Sione*, and healing/fortification media such as blessed water are believed to play a role in creating these attachments. Second, these covenants with the devil must be broken in the name and power of Jesus, the demons expelled and cursed, and a new covenant with God established and sealed by the blood of Jesus. Although the devil is strong, the power of Jesus is incomparable. Third, as a rule, Christians should not have troubling dreams of deceased persons. If the deceased do appear, they should be treated as demons that should be cast out, leaving the person liberated and clean.

The final aspect to note is the impact this type of belief has upon family relationships. The young woman being delivered was explicitly warned not to participate in ASC activities even if pressured by her family. According to Monnakgosi, refusal to participate in these rites often creates family tension, and it is not to be feared but expected. Parents should be obeyed but only if their instruction aligns with that taught by the Word of God (as interpreted by GM). From these brief comments, one can already recognize the fundamentally different approach adopted by GM as compared to the HC. The immediate classification of ASC activities as demonic, the focus on breaking bonds, expelling and cursing spirits, and the willingness to foment family division all point to a confrontational approach. This becomes even more evident when turning to the broader issue of how GM deals with traditional Setswana beliefs and practices.

6.3.2.3 Attitudes Towards The Ancestors

In Chapter Five (5.5.2.1), I briefly discussed the results from the Questionnaire which revealed that the vast majority of GM members (nearly 90%) do not believe one's deceased relatives can communicate with the living. As a follow-up question, GM members were asked what they would do if their deceased grandfather appeared in a dream (#49)? Many rejected the possibility, or claimed they would stand against the devil and "tell that demon appearing in the form of my grandfather to go and never come back again in the name of Jesus". These results accord well with what is publicly taught at GM, although in the excerpt cited above, Apostle Monnakgosi did allow for the slight possibility of Christian ancestors appearing in a dream. Normally no distinction is made between demonic spirits and ancestral spirits (*badimo*) as ancestral spirits are believed to be "familiar" spirits, demons disguised as one's deceased relatives.⁴⁵

This teaching was explicitly explained by Pastor Bait seng in his sermon on "seducing spirits".⁴⁶ He told of how people believe the *badimo* come to them in dreams and tell them to sacrifice a black cow because they are displeased. According to Bait seng, the reality is that Satan has sent a "ghost" (*sepoko*)⁴⁷ or a demon camouflaged as a deceased relative. These spirits arrive in dreams to tell people their suffering will be alleviated if they perform sacrifices in an attempt to gain the favour of their deceased relatives. But in the GM ideology, this is all a cruel deception by the devil intended to hold people enslaved in sickness, poverty and sin. For this reason, GM members categorically refuse to participate in any traditional rites (*go phasa* or *go phekola badimo*) that are intended to maintain relationships with the *badimo*.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ A. Andreck, Personal Interview (17 June 2005). This view is also espoused by BLM leaders: B. Keloneilwe, Personal Interview (30 April 2002), and G. Kganchaba, Personal Interview (8 August 2002).

⁴⁶ GM, Gaborone (17 March 2002). Anderson (2006:127-128, 131) provides examples of this teaching from other NPC sources.

⁴⁷ Derived from the English word, "spook".

⁴⁸ All GM respondents refuse to participate in traditional rites (#50), on account that these events contradict the Bible, are demonic, and GM members have no communication with the dead (#51).

Whereas some HC members may view the ancestors as angels in disguise, GM members are convinced demons are masquerading as deceased relatives.

6.3.2.4 Approach To Setswana Medicine And ASC Healing

As one might expect, the confrontational approach towards *badimo* (ancestors) adopted by GM also extends to their understanding of Setswana medicine. Considering Monnakgosi's historic ties to Reinhard Bonnke (see 2.4.3), this is no surprise, as "Bonnke summarizes anything concerned with traditional religion under the term 'witchcraft,' which is totally rejected, despised and fought against through denunciation and prayer" (Gifford 1992a:163). The all-encompassing condemnation of things pertaining to Setswana medicine and spirituality is also extended to ASC leadership and rituals. Monnakgosi claimed that ASC prophets "conjure up power from snakes – their lives are empty and defeated – no real character of God".⁴⁹ Their activities are demonically inspired imitations of the genuine power of God. For example, tongue-speaking in ASCs is described as "people rolling around, foaming at the mouth, stripping off their clothes and speaking a strange gibberish".⁵⁰ The conflation of ASC practices with traditional medicine was made complete in a colourful retelling of the story of the woman who had suffered at the hands of various doctors with a hemorrhage for 12 years before being healed by Jesus (Mk. 5:26). The preacher claimed she had gone to traditional doctors, spiritual healers with their "water", and to those who use the Bible to diagnose disease in a demonic way.⁵¹

Turning specifically to Setswana medicine, the Questionnaire results highlight the two-kingdom ideology espoused by GM followers. When asked, "Does Setswana culture ever conflict with your church's teaching?" (#46), almost everyone (94%) responded in the positive, with most pointing to conflicts over "ancestral worship",

⁴⁹ D.D. Monnakgosi, Personal Interview (7 May 2002).

⁵⁰ GM (30 November 2003).

⁵¹ GM (3 March 2002). The preacher was referring to the ASC practice of determining disease through what appears to be the random selection of a Bible verse (*go tlhatlhoba ka Baebele*).

“talking to the dead” or “traditional doctors”. Every respondent emphasized that their spiritual power is fundamentally different from that employed by traditional healers (#52). The major difference for most (88%) was that the power of the church comes from God/Jesus, whereas traditional doctors rely upon ancestors or demons (#53). In claiming God as their source of power, GM members confidently assert that the traditional doctors are no match for them. While traditional healers are believed by many Batswana to have power derived from the ancestors, GM members refuse to accept that the dead can even communicate with the living.⁵²

The antipathy GM demonstrates towards traditional rites is abundantly evident in their comments, sermons, prayers and testimonies. In the sermon referred to earlier (6.3.2.3), Pastor Bait seng drew on the Setswana custom of *motsetsi* – the practice where older women take care of young nursing mothers and their newborn babies. He began by denigrating the capacity of these women for this task based on their lack of education and training. He then claimed these old women invoked spirits to help them capture the minds of innocent children and dedicate them to the devil. “These women come with black medicine and put it on the child’s head, and then the parents wonder why their child is useless when he grows older. The devil has his own intentions for these children”. He also condemned those in the ASCs who still promote traditional practices as people “who profess to be Christian but deny the power of Jesus”. Born again Christians must “publicly declare and denounce what was done to them”, and be delivered from these traditional covenant incantations. “These dedications to the devil are very serious, and one needs a greater force than the devil to deliver the child – that power is the name of Jesus”.

He went on to cite numerous other traditional rites linked with births, funerals and weddings as activities that may appear harmless, but are actually schemes of Satan designed to enslave a person spiritually. According to Bait seng, believers must refuse

⁵² This is one area where some disagreement exists between GM and BLM. It is important to note that a significant minority (22%) of BLM respondents believe that “one’s deceased relatives can communicate with the living” (#33). Another 22% of the respondents did not answer this question, suggesting that a significant amount of disagreement exists on this aspect of BLM teaching.

to participate in these rituals, for to do so is the same as declaring “the Word of God powerless”. Referring to I Timothy 4:1,⁵³ he warned the congregation that the devil will try to deceive them with the threat of family pressure or ostracism: “The devil says, ‘Don’t you see that you’ll be disappointing or disobeying your mother. Don’t worry, it will be OK, you can rededicate yourself later’”. He strongly admonished his listeners not to allow traditional doctors, ASC prophets, or anyone wanting to perform these rituals into their homes. These activities are of Satan, and his desire is to steal, kill and destroy (Jn. 10:10). Therefore even if a parent employs a threat of physical force, GM members should not give in, for when that happens then one knows Satan is at work.

6.3.2.5 Break With Family And Tradition

The consequences of this rejection of Setswana rites reverberate through both immediate and extended family relationships. The outright refusal of GM members to fulfill traditional obligations at marriage such as paying the “bride price” (*lobola/bogadi*), and undergoing fertility and fortification rites performed by traditional doctors has brought them into serious conflict with non-GM family members on numerous occasions. Bait seng and Monnakgosi, as well as other leaders, proudly testify to the manner in which they stood firm in the face of opposition from members and intense pressure to participate in Setswana rituals. For GM, the demonization of Setswana medicine and ASC practices requires difficult decisions, but they would argue that it is for the purpose of evangelizing unsaved family members.

Somewhat related to this topic is their belief that certain geographic areas are spiritual “hot spots” where demonic forces are especially active in wreaking havoc in individuals and communities. These “territorial spirits” are equated with the biblical “principalities and powers” (Eph. 6:11-12), and believed to have been granted spiritual authority through primal covenants to exercise their evil influence (see Kalu 1998:13). GM members are enjoined to battle with these forces and denounce them in prayer,

⁵³ The verse reads: “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (NIV).

especially as it relates to the deliverance of their family members. The following GM prayer reminder illustrates the linkage well: “Pray for one’s biological relatives, taking authority over all forces, territorial spirits in their local areas, denounce covenants in their lives, release salvation and the fear of the Lord”.⁵⁴ Believers engage in spiritual warfare on behalf of themselves, their church, their families and the nation.

Although church members are encouraged to show their family members respect by sitting down and fully explaining their beliefs to them, there is no room for compromise within GM. The choice is stark according to Pastor Baitseng:

If you don’t listen to God’s Word, but rather listen to tradition, God will take his hand off of you. You become useless. You become like Samson who was dedicated in the right way but then drawn away. And in the end, they took out his eyes – this is what tradition will do to you. They will take away your vision and you will stop professing Christ.⁵⁵

Spiritual covenants made in the past, whether related to Setswana traditional rites or ASC activities can allow or actively encourage malignant spirits to enter and harass a person. All GM questionnaire respondents (#65) agreed that it is “important to break covenants made before a person is ‘born again’, and traditional doctors must be avoided at all costs for they employ demonic or ancestral power. According to Gopolang Botsie, “the important thing is to renounce the covenant – it is powerful to speak in faith and shame the devil”.⁵⁶

6.3.2.6 Tactics – Demonization And Replacement

As suggested in the Introduction to this chapter, GM, like other NPCs, does not so much reject Setswana tradition as re-interpret it and confront it directly through its covenant-breaking rituals. Although they challenge each another “to do away with our

⁵⁴ GM Prayer Ministry Hand-out (February 2002).

⁵⁵ GM, Gaborone (17 March 2002).

⁵⁶ Personal Interview (20 June 2005).

own tradition and look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith“,⁵⁷ the reality is that they are heavily engaged with “tradition” as they seek out explanations for the trials and tribulations of life. Not content with older explanations of witchcraft as the primary source of evil, they have demonized all manner of activities related to Setswana tradition and ASC spirituality, and made the devil their arch-enemy. Whereas traditional rites and beliefs were ignored or treated as mere superstition by mainstream Christianity in the past, GM and other NPCs firmly believe that witchcraft, ancestors (*badimo*) and traditional doctors all have significant power. Therefore, as spiritual warriors, their role is to seek and destroy all demonic power. Older members of society and family who refuse to accept their new ideology are also marginalized, or even intentionally demonized as well. In this process of “world-breaking”, they sense a freedom to explore the possibility of establishing a new identity “in Christ”.⁵⁸

This does not mean that they simply wipe the Setswana world off of their map. All the former Setswana beliefs in the reality of witchcraft, ancestors and traditional doctors are treated very seriously, and even though they clearly show a bias towards the use of English in their services, all sermons are translated into Setswana. Certain cultural values are still upheld including a preference for male leadership and modest attire. Even cultural art forms, including the performance of “praise poems” (*maboko*) to Jesus, have been incorporated into worship services. In his poem, “Here is trail of the Lion!” (*Motlhala wa tao ke o!*), White Ramagapu uses Setswana imagery while alluding to the biblical image of Jesus as the “Lion of Judah” in his contribution to a world-conquering theology.⁵⁹ He expresses himself as follows:

O bonwe ke banna le basadi (He [Jesus] was seen by men and women)
O bonwe ke dikgosi le dikgosana (He was seen by chiefs and headmen)
O bonetse go Bethemaio wa sefofu (He was revealed to the blind Bartimaeus)
E tlogetse phodiso – boitekanelo (He leaves salvation/healing – perfection).

⁵⁷ GM (3 March 2002).

⁵⁸ Eriksen (2007:82) has defined “world-breaking” as “the act of transcending the locally bounded culture through the active distancing of oneself from the past. The keyword is ‘transformation’; the reinvention of the self through transcending local culture”.

⁵⁹ See Alverson (1978:194-196) for a discussion concerning the long-held significance of Setswana “praise poems”. It is still common to hear them performed for prominent members of the community.

Even though it may look and sound like Setswana, it actually reflects the GM ideology in a complete and profound manner.

However, in their quest to overpower both Setswana and ASC ideologies, they are forced to meet the hard reality of frayed familial relationships and generational rifts. “Making a clean break with the past” is not an easy task, and may entail the painful rupture of previously close family relationships. This is where the necessity of entering a new covenant relationship with both God and the church becomes critical - the church in effect becomes one’s new “covenant” family. The Apostle Monnakgosi elucidates this new reality in one of his sermons:

Let me tell you something; church is not a club. It’s not a club that you can join and resign from anytime. Church is a covenant, the greatest covenant with the Lord God Almighty. The initiation of that covenant is the one between a husband and a wife. But we know that is going to come to an end. But the greatest is the one between us as the church and the Lord Jesus Christ. And if anyone comes out of you, automatically he is no longer your friend. Jesus Christ says, “He who is not with us is against us. And he who is with us, is for us.” That’s when the disciples were asking Him a question, “Should we stop all these people who are casting out demons in Your name, yet they are not one of us?” Jesus Christ gave them that good answer.

For you can not be in close company with people that do not have the same vision as you, with people that are not going the same direction as you. Let us understand that while we are here on earth, we cannot distance ourselves completely and totally from other people. But if we are going to be effective, we need to be people that are clear-minded, have clear direction, clear operation, clear faith, clear doctrine, clear lifestyle, clear testimony, clear walk, clear power. Shout amen, somebody!⁶⁰

In their determination to keep moving forward in all aspects of life, anything or anyone who hinders their progress is sidelined, while fellow church members become fellow soldiers in this spiritual battle. As Ruth Marshall-Fratani (1998:286) states it: “Friends, family and neighbors become ‘dangerous strangers,’ and strangers become new friends. The social grounds for creating bonds—are foresworn for the new bond of the

⁶⁰ GM (January 2001). Accessed June 2005. At BLM (19 May 2002), church leadership performed a covenant with new believers “to release [the] spiritual covering of this local church upon you and your life”.

brother or sister in Christ”. Armed with their “tactics” of demonization and replacement, they are ready to overpower both the ideology that has emerged from a reified view of Setswana, as well as what they believe is the too-cozy accommodation of ASCs to traditional beliefs.

6.4 The HC And GM Approaches To Western Influences

The previous section has highlighted the contentious divide between ASCs and NPCs with regard to their tactics when faced with the reified Setswana ideology. In this section, I will focus briefly on their efforts to relate to Western cultural forms and beliefs in a way that allows them to maintain and strengthen their perceived identities.

6.4.1 The HC Approach

6.4.1.1 The HC And “Development”

Although it might be convenient, it would be far too simplistic to argue that the HC is preoccupied with the traditional past, and therefore opposed to “progress” and “development”.⁶¹ The true picture is much more ambiguous, as demonstrated by the Archbishop’s proud declaration that the purpose of the church is “to make improvements in the lives of the young people through teaching and discussions of various developments/improvements (*ditlhabololo*)”.⁶² They actively support government efforts to promote better farming practices, fundraise for local football teams so that youth have positive entertainment options, and encourage their members to participate in the political process at all levels.⁶³ Even in their healing practices, they

⁶¹ Similar to the words, “tradition” and “modern”, the terms “progress” and “development” are loaded with ideological baggage, and can easily be used to denigrate non-European peoples. See Kumar (2007:36-42).

⁶² J. Madimabe, Personal Interview (22 September 2003).

⁶³ The HC actively encourages their members to vote, but refuses to take political positions or to indicate support for a specific candidate. One senses a certain amount of ambivalence as the Archbishop claims that political battles “create hatred and divisions within the church” (Personal Interview, 14 November 2003). The RBP position on politics is similar, although perhaps even more positive as a number of their leaders have played an active role in the governing Botswana Democratic Party.

have demonstrated a remarkable willingness to adapt due to the onslaught of HIV/AIDS. The standard use of emetics (*sepeita*) and induced vomiting (*go kwisa*) has been heavily curtailed due to the awareness that these practices can often leave those with AIDS in a severely weakened state. They have also incorporated vitamins produced by multinational pharmaceutical companies into their stock of medicines.⁶⁴

This does not mean, of course, that they have uncritically accepted all aspects of Western culture. The negative impact of alcohol, especially imported brands, on people young and old was noted by many, and more than a few blamed it for the spread of AIDS in the country. The rejection of alcohol appears as almost a standard feature in the conversion testimonies of many leaders in both the HC and RBP, and yet the communal drinking of traditional beer provided an important conclusion to the ritual described above. Another controversial topic is the move towards more egalitarian relationships between men and women, and young and old. According to Sentswela Madimabe, the HC follows the biblical pattern by “teaching women to take good care of their children and husbands, and that the young must show respect to their elders”.⁶⁵ Another leader claims: “It is the teaching that men and women are equal that has brought great sin and sickness into the land. No longer is there any respect in the home and women do as they please”.⁶⁶ And yet she qualified her dogmatic words by adding that she did feel that there should be consultation between husband and wife when decisions are made. Attire for women is only an issue in church, where women are prohibited from wearing trousers, while on other occasions it is not a church concern. One finds strong denunciations of Western influences, along with the selective utilization of those elements found helpful.

⁶⁴ Although one could question the efficacy of this edict, in RBP, all healing and fortification rituals that required people to share the same water (e.g., foot washing, drinking water from the same cups) were suspended until more is known about the spread of HIV/AIDS (A. Onneng, Personal Interview, 1 June 2005).

⁶⁵ Personal Interview (23 September 2003). For the HC, the biblical pattern is that “the man is head of the home” (*monna ke tlhogo ya lolwapa*).

⁶⁶ S. Molefe, Personal Interview (17 June 2005).

6.4.1.2 The HC And Money

One final example of their tactics in relation to Western influences concerns their views surrounding money and wealth. A useful place to begin is with the familiar story of the conversion of Zacchaeus, the tax collector (Lu. 19:1-10). For HC members, this narrative describes what should happen when someone, especially a wealthy person, turns their life over to Christ. Some of the answers provided on the Questionnaire are quite helpful for understanding their point of view. When asked if God promises to help Christians prosper financially (#59), 96% of the HC respondents answered in the negative.⁶⁷ Prior to that question, I asked whether Western culture (*sekgoa*) conflicts with HC church teachings (#57), with around 70% claiming that it did. When I asked how it did (#58), nearly half of the responses were variations of the idea that Western culture focuses on money, unlike their church!⁶⁸ Further light was shed on this discussion by Archbishop Madimabe who mentioned that in the fairly recent past (1980's) when people entered the church building, they did not just remove their shoes, but they left their money at the door as well.⁶⁹ In the HC, the Zacchaeus pericope confirms that money pollutes, while true Christianity, and even salvation, is demonstrated by giving money away to the poor in the community. For people who are struggling financially, this text becomes one that encourages them to know that they are "children of Abraham" (Lu. 19:10) because they are not among those who hoard financial wealth, but rather share what they have with those in need.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Based on HC preaching this is the answer one would expect. One brief sermon excerpt provides a glimpse into their teaching on wealth (30 November 2003): "The love of the world, like money and all the riches of the world, will prevent us from experiencing the reign of God" (*Go rata ga lefatshe ke gone go tlaa re kgoreletsang go bona mmuso wa legodimo, jaaka madi le dikhumo tsotlhe tsa lefatshe*).

⁶⁸ Some of the responses read as follows: "White people love riches more than God" (*Makgoa a rata khumo go na le Modimo*), and "Western culture follows hard after money" (*Sekgoa se setse madi morago thata*).

⁶⁹ Personal Interview (8 July 2007). He also said that they no longer follow this practice but it appears that it still has a residual effect on their perspective of money. Mbiti (2004:229) also makes note of this practice among other ASCs.

⁷⁰ Jean Comaroff (1985:236-237) and R. Petersen (1996:230-231) have discussed at length the way in which ASCs conduct their ritual offerings in an attempt "to resituate the coin, symbol of domination and of power outside of their control, into a ritually controlled and communally orientated context".

The reason I have provided these examples is to demonstrate that the HC approach to Western influences is neither blanket acceptance nor total rejection, but a careful negotiation where “tactics” are employed to safeguard their self-defined identity. Clearly they wish to preserve a close linkage to their Setswana values, but they are not opposed to integrating elements of Western influence when they deem it useful. Central in this discussion is their clear preference for the Setswana language over that of English, as it allows them to both feel at home as well as give them power to define reality in their terms, not those of a foreigner.⁷¹

6.4.2 The GM Approach

6.4.2.1 GM And Prosperity

The impact of Western ideas on the genesis, doctrine and identity of the NPC movement has already been discussed in Chapter Two (2.2.2) and Chapter Three (3.3.2.1). At this point, I want to touch briefly on their desire to both embrace prosperity and a global outlook, while maintaining their distinct identity. There is no doubt that both GM and BLM proclaim a message intended to encourage their followers to succeed in the modern, urban world. An important aspect in their rationale for doing so is the perception of widespread failure to prosper in post-independence Africa. Even in Botswana which has seen strong economic growth and development, significant numbers of people still long to experience greater levels of financial security. This lack of success has been labeled the “demon of poverty”, and according to many NPC leaders, it must be exorcised from the lives of people who want to succeed.

Made subservient to foreign authorities while working for minimal pay, many Batswana men have struggled to regain their self-respect. Although women have gained greater rights and freedoms in the recent past, they too are looking for a brighter future. Young people, most of whom are far better educated than their parents, are

⁷¹ Thatayaone Robert, a young man from RBP, made the following astute observation: “Batswana love to listen to someone from outside of the country. A foreigner who speaks English is believed to have more power than a Motswana. But our message is just as good and important” (Personal Interview, 17 June 2005).

eager to hear a message that provides them with confidence and hope. But the “demon of poverty” threatens to keep Africans locked in a cycle of failure and despair. David Maxwell of Zimbabwe (1998:358) explains the idea well: “Africans stay poor, not because of structural injustice, but because of a Spirit of poverty. Even though they are born again, only their soul has in fact been redeemed. Ancestral spirits, along with their pernicious influence, remain in their blood. These ancestors were social and economic failures during their own lifetimes”. According to Monnakgosi, deliverance from this debilitating spirit may take considerable time (up to 3 years) but is possible through intense prayer, teaching and career counseling.⁷²

Based on their dualistic cosmology of God-Satan, good-evil, an inability to prosper needs a spiritual explanation and the spirit of poverty provides it. Therefore, in order to emerge victorious, new believers need to be set free from past failure (whether individual or communal) and taught to face the future with confidence. This is the dynamic at work when Monnakgosi declares that “every child of God is a genius,” or a visiting Nigerian pastor leads the BLM congregation in a declarative chant, “I am a child of God. Hell has lost its power. I confess with my mouth that I am a winner – I am not a loser. I am a victor, not a victim. Jesus Christ in me makes me a winner”.⁷³ Victory and success tend to be defined in Western categories such as financial prosperity, academic achievement and the acquisition of a spouse who holds the same values.

Although their message is not overtly pro-Western, it is somewhat inevitable that their followers are drawn to acquire those Western goods, such as automobiles, computers and clothing, that signify success. Their conspicuous consumption, while normal by Western standards, seriously conflicts with the traditional “moral economy of witchcraft” which suggests that if one is prospering, there is a high probability it is happening at someone else’s expense. The most common assumption is that one’s

⁷² Personal Interview (7 May 2002). It is important to note that GM and BLM work with new believers to help them find employment and useful educational opportunities.

⁷³ Pastor Felix Omobude, BLM (19 May 2002). Dr. Sitima (28 April 2002) confidently proclaims that “nothing can stop the person with a covenant with God. When I hear of covenant, I know I am a winner”.

success has been garnered through the use of sorcery or witchcraft (Ellis & ter Haar 2004:151; Harries 2006:152).⁷⁴ But with their focus on God-given prosperity and the confidence that they have protection from the Spirit, GM members view their success as a sign that their ideology is taking them in the right direction. Unencumbered by forces from their Setswana world, GM members have an incentive to work hard and expect to accomplish what they set out to do. They can optimistically surge into the modern economic space and employ the various available technologies, with confidence that the Spirit of God is present with them protecting them from defeat (Kalu 2009:84). With their positive approach to life, “clean, holy and pure” ethic, and emphasis on education and job training, GM members are highly employable and therefore it is not surprising to find a certain amount of “redemptive uplift” among new believers. In addition, the increased social and spiritual distance from family members created by their born again experience, provides new members with the opportunity for increased personal accumulation (see Maxwell 1998:354).

Drawing on foreign technologies and resources, GM projects an outward-looking vision that eagerly benefits from global connections. Not only has Apostle Monnakgosi travelled widely, but even many of the younger members have studied internationally. Returning to Botswana as well-qualified experts, they are ready to contribute to both their church and the wider society. Equipped with new skills and Western media technologies they seek to advance the gospel into new regions and by new methods. Not content to accept the status quo, GM members are unafraid to face powerful Western forces because they believe the Spirit will enable them to utilize foreign resources beneficially as well as avoid the pitfalls associated with them.

6.4.2.2 GM And Ethics

The preceding discussion could lead one to the conclusion that GM almost uncritically integrates Western technologies, values and symbols into their ideology.

⁷⁴ While previously their prosperity was attributed to God, successful NPC pastors in Nigeria are now facing occult accusations as well (Merz 2008:214).

Modern musical instruments and sound technologies are utilized in the church. Cars, computers and other Western innovations are accepted and blessed, and almost all Setswana is translated into English. Youth and women are allowed to take prominent places of ministry. But certain Western elements such as sloppy dress, punk haircuts, rock and roll music, movies, tattoos, body piercings, alcohol and tobacco are all strongly condemned. Women should never wear trousers, nor should they braid their hair or wear earrings. With I Peter 3:1-6 as their biblical rationale, the church teaches young women to adorn themselves modestly and carry themselves with dignity and respect. Their firm adherence to the “house rules” of the church may appear oppressive but as has been noted in other African contexts, the strict moral ethic adopted by many NPCs may actually enable many women to experience a new level of freedom (see Marshall-Fratani 1991:29-32). Although these prohibitions have been unpopular with some, and may well have led some young people to leave the church, they enable GM teachers to maintain their claim of “no compromise” with the world.

The GM preoccupation with personal morality suggests that their ideological approach to Western influences is largely one of acceptance on the macro-level, but much more selective on the micro-level dealing with individual behaviours. GM sermons do not touch on structural issues concerning poverty, HIV/AIDS, the environment, racism, classism or sexism. Politics is not discussed although GM members are encouraged to vote for those politicians with godly moral convictions. Their strong “in-group” mentality demands that one keep a certain distance from people who might draw them into sin, but little is said about the effects of a consumptive lifestyle. The consequences of their somewhat selective “tactics” when dealing with Western influences has led them to gravitate towards materialism, individualism and globalization, while at the same time rejecting elements of Western morality, especially as it pertains to physical appearance and sexual mores.

6.5 Conclusion

At the outset of this chapter, I suggested that the most divisive element in the relationship between ASCs and NPCs was their approach to both the reified world of Setswana and the modern influences of Western culture. Through personal observation, Questionnaire results, interviews and services I have sought to verify the positions of both types of churches. Certain realities have emerged including the HC willingness to perform sacrifices, make requests of the ancestors, employ physical objects to mediate spiritual power and allow their members to participate in traditional Setswana rites. The HC largely accepts the definitions and roles for ancestors, traditional doctors and witchcraft offered within the Setswana cosmology. However, they also believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ introduces a fundamentally new element into the picture. Having experienced salvation in Christ, they now claim that the Spirit of God provides them with power far greater than that of the ancestor-dependent traditional healers. Setswana rituals surrounding birth, weddings and funerals are not so much eliminated but replaced with Christianized versions. Maintaining close family relationships remains a high priority. Therefore, the ancestors (*badimo*) are still believed to impact the lives of their relatives, but they must submit to the power of Jesus and accept a subservient role. Those traditional healers who use their power to promote life, while not welcomed into the church, are certainly tolerated.

Within the two-kingdom GM ideology, however, the ASC position in relation to the ancestors and traditional medicine is seen as nothing less than a demonic pact with the devil. Primal covenants established by previous generations must be obliterated by the power of the Spirit, and a new covenant with God and the church should be instituted by means of the blood of Jesus. While they, too, engage Setswana traditional beliefs and practices, their approach is far more confrontational, consisting of a widespread demonization of those who engage in any form of these rituals. Although traditional understandings of Setswana beliefs are radically reinterpreted, there is no sign that they have dismissed evil spirits, witchcraft and ancestors as mere superstition (as does Western secularism). In the GM world, there is no room for compromise as

one is either following God or Satan, and past participation in traditional rites requires complete renunciation and deliverance.

Turning to their approaches towards Western influences, one finds that the HC continues to exercise a life-promoting agenda. Careful to maintain their Setswana identity, they willingly accept Western conveniences and development inasmuch as it seems to provide a better standard of living. However they are not unaware of the poisoning effect of money as demonstrated by their critical view of the Western preoccupation with financial success. Christians with excess wealth should share with those who are less fortunate; and in this way the entire community benefits from the provision of God's blessings. The HC ideology demands that they walk a fine line where they seek to retain and modify what they find important in the Setswana tradition, while carefully selecting those foreign cultural forms which enhance life in the present. In so doing the HC remains highly attractive to those non-believers who still retain significant ties to their Setswana identity, while also providing a lens through which to view the perceived benefits of Western culture.

The GM approach to the modernizing influences of the West reflects a keen desire to provide a message that engages current urban realities in Botswana. The world inhabited by young residents of Gaborone is very different from that of their parents or grandparents. Western values and ideas have drastically changed their lives, and they want a message that makes sense of their experience. Using the Bible as their guide and inspiration, NPCs like GM and BLM both reinterpret the way Batswana once understood reality while also offering their own understanding of the modern world. No longer do GM members need to accept economic hardship as a normal part of life because the spirit of poverty can be exorcised through the power of the Spirit. With Christ in them, they can confidently access Western resources and depend on themselves instead of having to defer to older members of society.

The GM ideology is highly concerned with accessing power, and being enabled to make one's way in a brand new situation. One needs to look at who is and who is

not attending these new churches. Who are the ones being encouraged to take hold of the opportunities offered by the globalizing influence of modernity? To this point, it has primarily been young people in urban settings. With no memory of pre-Independence Botswana, these young adults (many who are far better educated than their elders) want to make their own way instead of submitting to the “powers that be”, who are often identified as unwitting servants of the devil (see Van Dijk 1998:168). The GM vision of the world is not so much a dichotomy between Setswana and Western culture but between the reign of God and the reign of Satan. Everything is interpreted in light of this spiritual battle that plays itself out here on earth. But GM members do not have to worry because they have the power of the Spirit, and direction from God’s Word. Elements of Setswana culture, along with Western technologies, are free to be embraced so long as they further the reign of God as understood by GM. If not, they must either be reinterpreted using biblical images and ideas or else totally rejected.

In the previous chapters, I have sought to explore the ASC and NPC efforts to create “worlds of the Spirit” in relation to the various ideologies seeking to capture the attention of contemporary Batswana. Having explored the origins of these movements, their self-identities, hermeneutics, approaches to healing and deliverance and now their tactics in relation to cultures, it has become clear that while these churches share a common belief in the presence and power of the Spirit, their fundamental differences in cosmology preclude any attempt to combine the two movements into one category. Although they may have a similar goal (to provide a life-empowering gospel message in the Botswana context), their approaches to the competing ideologies in their context have led them to produce very different ideologies for their followers. In the concluding chapter I will recap my findings as well as raise and explore a number of critical questions in relation to the two fundamental missiological issues raised in the course of this study: the limits of contextualization and the importance of ecumenism for mission efforts.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“WORLDS OF THE SPIRIT” AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

7.1 Introduction

As indicated in the introductory chapter, the purpose of this study has been to examine the relationship between African Spiritual and New Pentecostal Churches in an effort to understand their growth, influence on society and innovative attempts to navigate the complex interface of the reified Setswana world with modernizing influences arriving from the West. Both movements have relied heavily upon the Spirit of God to provide them with supernatural power in their visions for a world that is neither wholly traditional nor modern, but a world that represents their understanding of the Bible, and most importantly enables them to experience the abundant life promised by Jesus. Due to their reliance upon the Spirit in their effort to mediate cultures, numerous outside observers have attempted to combine the two movements and described them as Pentecostal. Although this ecumenical attempt is laudable on some levels, I have argued that it obscures the original and creative impulses that exist within each of these church groups. Both types of churches are engaged in the *missio Dei*; but if we conflate them, the unique contributions of each are easily lost.

Due to the heavy emphasis placed on the experience and exercise of spiritual power found within these movements, throughout the course of this study I have utilized the insights concerning power relations developed by Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, James Scott and John and Jean Comaroff as an analytical framework. Based on an understanding that power is always applied in relation to other parties, I have discussed the ways in which these movements have engaged with the competing ideologies present in the Botswana context to create their own “worlds of the Spirit”. Even though these movements have arisen from a position of disadvantage, they have consciously employed their agentive power to produce “hidden transcripts” as a form of “coded resistance”. Employing a variety of techniques in their discourse with the

Setswana and Western worlds, they have rejected, reinterpreted, adapted and adopted various signs, symbols, technologies and rituals in an effort to empower their followers. Both types of churches have argued that the Spirit of God has guided them in this process of ideological negotiation.

Numerous examples have been cited as evidence of both intentional and perhaps unintentional efforts to produce and promulgate an ideology of power. The research has illustrated the manner in which these churches have appropriated the Bible, reified tenets of Setswana culture and Western technologies as resources in the production of spiritual knowledge and experience. This creative “borrowing” is a critical undertaking for “knowledge is power” (Foucault). ASCs have continued to relate to the ancestors of their Setswana past and the angels of the Bible in a manner that suggests a conscious effort to engage in “coded resistance”. NPCs actively promote the use of modern signs and technologies as a symbol of their willingness to engage the new possibilities found in the urban environment, while still recognizing the Satanic powers of witchcraft, curses and the demon of poverty. Neither group is fully Setswana, nor fully Western, but a complex amalgamation of elements from these competing ideologies.

Viewing power in terms of a “discourse” or “conversation” between opposing forces has produced a number of significant insights. It is especially useful for explaining some of the animosity that exists between ASCs and NPCs. The impact of the rapidly-changing historical context in Botswana cannot be underestimated. The ASCs clearly arose as a movement concerned with the hegemonic influence of Western modernity, and looked to the Spirit, the Bible and resources from their Setswana world from which to engage these powerful forces in an effort to establish their own identity. NPCs, on the other hand, originated at a time when Western power had already become so ubiquitous that it was necessary to develop a new tactic. Adopting a much more accommodating posture, they have found within the Bible the necessary resources to help them selectively choose numerous aspects of Western culture to create a compelling ‘imaginaire’ of power. But even as their discourse with the West

became more intimate, they demonized certain aspects of Setswana culture so thoroughly that those elements could only be dealt with by means of exorcism.

From a socio-historical point of view, analyzing the ASC and NPC relationship based on the conceptual framework that power is understood best as a discourse between competing ideologies explains much concerning their differences. But, even this analytical tool has its shortcomings. While it may describe many of the dynamics at work in this ideological clash of “worlds”, it cannot fully explain why these movements choose to adopt or adapt certain elements of one culture, while rejecting others. One needs to recognize the unique creative impulses coursing through these movements. Here is where one must take seriously the role of the Spirit of God, an example of what the Comaroffs have referred to as non-agentive power. To study these movements without acknowledging their explicit appeal to the Spirit as their inspiration, guide and ultimate source of power is to overlook the most critical feature of their worldview and self-identity.

How does one account for the remarkable conversion of Archbishop Madimabe, when he seemed to move from hardened opponent to committed follower of Christ in a matter of seconds, seemingly without his consent? Apostle Monnakgosi’s resurrection-like experience is difficult to explain using the tools employed in this study. Physical healings, prophetic revelation, speaking in tongues, and even radical life transformation are experiences full of complexity that defy the highly rationalized explanations of modern research methodology. Thus, while I believe my analysis has shed some light on what is happening in the relationship between ASCs and NPCs, a full account should pay attention to the mysterious working of God. With their emphasis on spiritual experience, both types of churches argue that one can never fully understand what is happening among them without actually receiving revelation from God. Although I am not prepared to accept that argument completely, there is room to acknowledge an element of truth within it.

Both of these movements recognize the inspiration of God's Spirit as paramount in the creation and ongoing life of their churches, but that has not led to unity. The serious division that exists between these movements is highly lamentable, but it is real and will not be resolved as long as it is minimized or simply denied. In this concluding chapter I will summarize the findings of the previous chapters, noting the areas of overlap between the groups as well as highlighting the critical areas of disagreement. The missionary efforts to contextualize the gospel found in both types of churches are crucially important. Botswana society clearly needs the ASC emphasis on a caring, peace-promoting community, as well as the NPC message of spiritual empowerment that encourages individuals to strive to fulfill God's intentions for their lives.

Building on the missionary emphases found in both ASC and NPC movements is the second major concern of this final chapter. These churches illustrate well the challenges of contextualization, especially where multiple ideologies are involved. In reference to biblical hermeneutics, Musa Dube (1996:125) argues: "For today's multi-cultural and multi-faith global village, a mode of reading that allows one to encounter and to acknowledge the strength and weaknesses of our different cultures, and to respectfully learn cross-culturally is imperative". However, the critical differences between the groups force one to ask whether any or all theological constructs are equally valid? When contextualizing the gospel message, issues of cultural hybridity, synthesis or charges of syncretism quickly come to the fore. In order to engage in mission effectively instead of arguing over religious or cultural fidelity, churches need to discover ways of dialoguing with one another. True contextualization cannot take place in isolation, but requires a community of believers from various traditions.

7.2 Summary Of Findings

7.2.1 Power And Context

Throughout the course of this study I have sought to illustrate the efforts of both ASCs and NPCCs to manage the competing ideologies that have impinged on their lives. The traditional Setswana world, missionary Christianity, and the Western forces of

modernization, urbanization, globalization and secularization have all played a major role in the Botswana context over the past 150 years. Taking the socio-cultural context seriously requires one to recognize the decisive role of power dynamics in the formation and development of the movements being studied. As described above (7.1), I have attempted to employ an analytical framework that understands power in terms of relations between competing ideologies (Foucault), where symbols and rituals from a variety of sources are often utilized creatively by dominated groups as “tactics” to resist hegemonic “strategies” (de Certeau). Insights from the work of James Scott, John and Jean Comaroff, and Robin Petersen all point to the manner in which these dominated groups do not merely succumb to foreign influences but actually absorb, recast, modify, reject and adapt imported signs, symbols and technologies. This “coded resistance” is manifested in multitudinous ways in the faith and practice of both ASCs and NPCs.

To use more missiological language, what these churches have done is contextualize their understanding of the gospel so that it meets the existential needs of their followers. Power is never exercised in a vacuum; and the spiritual power claimed by both movements is best understood in relation to the forces at work around them. But it is also reductionist to claim that they are merely the by-products of historical cultural change. Both groups claim the Spirit of God as the inspiration for the identities and ideological constructs they have created to help them traverse the complexities of modern Botswana, and their claims should be given credence. The narratives describing the origins of the churches in the study illustrate well the interconnectedness of both the historical context and spiritual dynamics.

7.2.2 Origins – Local, Global And Spiritual Impulses

Based on the importance of analyzing relations of power, the second chapter dealt with the question of church origins in relation to the dynamics at work within the Botswana context. As one might expect, the 19th century introduction of missionary Christianity along with Western colonialism had a momentous impact on the tribal groups that constitute the Batswana people. New technologies, labour practices,

government structures, gender relations and, of course, religious beliefs all challenged their customs and self-understanding. Although certain elements of Setswana life were destroyed, numerous other rituals and beliefs remained fixed in the Batswana consciousness, although often modified or practiced in secret. This was especially true of beliefs related to the ancestors, traditional medicine and witchcraft. Eventually the accumulation of these signs, symbols and technologies were reified as *Setswana*, an ideology distinct from and sometimes in opposition to Western culture, *Sekgoa*. In effect, a type of “dual system” (Schreiter 1985:144-146) was created where individuals understood that familial and village expectations might be quite different from what one experienced in town or when employed as a migrant labourer.

From the beginning of the 20th century until well into the 1970’s large numbers of men travelled to countries neighboring Botswana to find work. These men were exposed to many of the cultural influences mentioned above, but in addition they also came into contact with a new form of Christianity. Unlike the Christianity of the missionaries, which tended to either demonize or secularize Setswana beliefs, these Spiritual Churches took a much different approach. Relying upon the Spirit of God for power and guidance, they dealt directly with traditional beliefs and practices, including dreams and visions. It was in this context that the ASC leaders, Joel Madimabe (HC) and Matlho Dichaba (RBP), experienced a spiritual rebirth and subsequent empowerment for mission. Madimabe’s admission that he relied upon traditional medicine while also attending a mission-funded church illustrates the “dual system” mentioned earlier. His encounter with the Spirit of God while trying to disrupt a Head Mountain of God Apostolic Church service fundamentally reshaped his understanding of the world. He came into contact with a power he had not experienced previously, and it propelled him into a whole new direction in life.

The *Setswana-Sekgoa* conflict described above reverberated throughout Botswana society. In the years following Independence, social change continued unabated as the discovery of diamonds in the country led to the rapid development of infrastructure, including transportation, education and health services. The population

increased rapidly and large numbers of people left village life for urban centers. The higher standard of living, combined with better educational opportunities, encouraged a desire for even greater levels of economic progress. The NPCs arose during this period of rapid societal upheaval and the concomitant pursuit of personal and economic success. While the ASC leaders were heavily influenced by those seeking to bridge the *Setswana-Sekgoa* divide, NPC leaders like D.D. Monnakgosi and Enock Sitima came into contact with Western Pentecostal evangelists who preached a message that resonated with a more global outlook. They wanted an empowering ideology that would equip them with the resources to progress into an uncertain future. But just as importantly, they too claimed to have heard from God, experienced miracles of healing and witnessed the Spirit transform people's lives. The testimonies of these leaders all highlight their charismatic endowment as well as significant opposition from parental, tribal and/or government authorities.

One of the more surprising findings of this study is the high level of similarity in the "call" narratives of the church founders and their initial efforts to establish their churches within the country. In terms of their remarkable experiences with the Spirit, the obvious similarities outweigh the differences. It is only through a consideration of their responses to the socio-historical realities taking place around them that one begins to appreciate the complex impact of the ideological clashes in Botswana society. Allan Anderson's argument (2002:167) that the NPC movement is a continuation of the older ASCs "in a very different context" is compelling if one restricts the scope of study to the origins of these movements. But the story does not end there, and the ideological constructs developed by these movements diverged significantly once these leaders began to articulate and live out their "worlds of the Spirit."

7.2.3 Ideologies Of Power

In Chapters Three through Six, I delved into the distinctive elements of both movements through an analysis of their identities, hermeneutics, healing and deliverance rituals and manner of dealing with ideologies other than their own. In their

efforts to create a new kind of world that provides them with power for life, both movements exhibit a type of creative tension between “continuity and discontinuity” in their relations with traditional and modern resources (Anderson 2004a:238). Using the “bridge between cultures” analogy first suggested by Sundkler, one could argue that they provide a way of maintaining a connection with both tradition and modernity (Venter 2004:9), as long as one recognizes the innovative impulses at work within each movement.¹ It is critical to remember their reliance upon their unique reading of the Bible as well as the reception of special spiritual revelation to guide them in the process of establishing an ideology. In effect, both groups employ a variety of “tactics” to create new religious identities in what might be referred to as a “spiritual synthesis” of both local and global resources as mediated by the Bible.

When analyzing the self-identities of the two types of churches, it is immediately apparent that both groups display a dependence upon the Spirit of God, and have self-consciously sought to develop their worldviews in relation to the Bible. The data collected demonstrated their commitment to a spiritual rebirth experience through commitment to Christ, belief in the triune God, the practice of prayer, fasting, evangelism, the Lord’s Supper and baptism. In these fundamental ways, they demonstrate continuity with historic Christianity. Furthermore, in both types of churches, worship tends to be expressive, incorporating the physical, emotional and mental capacities of the entire congregation. Although their worship styles appear distinct in some ways due to their use of different instruments, songs and languages, the emphasis on engaging the whole person is clearly in view in both cases.

When comparing their views of the three members of the Godhead, there are substantial areas of agreement, including the belief in God as Creator, Jesus as Saviour and the Spirit as the one who provides power to experience a good life. Both groups would certainly argue that their understanding of God emerges from a careful reading of

¹ Referring specifically to Xhosa ASCs, Luke Pato (1990:35) focuses on their ability to draw on multiple sources in order to legitimize their ideology. “They are based neither on wholesale acceptance of the traditional Xhosa nor the European Christian cultures, yet they draw on both traditions to give authority and authenticity to their new form of existence”.

the Bible, their authority for belief and practice. In Chapter Four, I analyzed their experience-based hermeneutic, which is not so much a method but a thematic grid through which all Scripture is interpreted. Although the emphases for each group diverge, their “methods” actually display considerable overlap as it enables them to “own” the Word of God and promote their own identity and ideology while doing so. Faced with a variety of competing ideologies, the triad of Spirit, Word and experience enables both groups to focus on life-giving themes that are both derived from, and validated by, the Bible.

The concern of both groups to help their followers experience “life as God intends” is evident from the heavy emphasis they place on ritual and symbols expected to help restore spiritual, physical, mental, emotional and relational health to their followers. Their methods and beliefs surrounding disease diverge significantly but one must acknowledge that they are attempting to address similar needs through total reliance upon the Spirit of God, the power of prayer and faith in Christ. Both groups acknowledge the reality of Satan and evil spirits as forces which destroy life. In concert, they believe that ancestors, angels, witchcraft and traditional medicine are not superstitions of the traditional past, but active forces to be dealt with in the present. Furthermore, both groups do not uncritically accept modern values and resources, but selectively apply their tactics to determine what they will retain, reject or modify in order to establish their ideologies of power.

7.2.4 “Worlds Of The Spirit”

7.2.4.1 Self-Identity

Having noted significant areas of similarity between the groups, it now becomes imperative to delineate the critical areas of disagreement. Although both groups employ a vast array of media, signs and symbols, both local and foreign, the identities they have created are highly distinct. Through their use of Setswana architecture, language, and symbols, the Hermon Church creates a familiar ethos for Batswana more accustomed to traditional rural life. In addition, the primacy they place on interpersonal

harmony, a fundamental value according to both Scripture and Setswana culture, permeates all that they do. The wonderful ideal of Psalm 133, given to Archbishop Madimabe in a spiritual vision, serves as a principal resource for HC identity construction. This Psalm, with its close linkage of communal unity, idyllic Mount Zion and their church name, Hermon, has become the goal towards which they strive. Unwilling to jettison crucial elements of Setswana life and tradition, they believe the Spirit of God enables them to forge a new Christian identity that does not force them to reject their language or their past.

Within Goodnews Ministries, their Christian identity has been heavily influenced by beliefs, practices and values drawn from Western Pentecostalism and modernity. Primary descriptors for this movement are “born again”, Spirit-filled, revivalist and successful. The majority of their membership consists of youth and young adults who want to prosper both spiritually and materially in the challenging reality of urban Botswana. By means of their attire, use of technology, building architecture and facility in English, they project an image that is modern, globally connected and prosperous. Having undergone the world-breaking experiences of spiritual rebirth and Spirit baptism, they are confident that God will help them succeed in all aspects of life, whether it is preaching, evangelism, education, business or finance. Scripture passages such as Luke 24:49 with its promise of “power from on high” are foundational for establishing their identity.

7.2.4.2 Members Of The Godhead

When comparing the two churches, one cannot help but recognize the fundamental differences in architecture, physical appearance, congregational age, preferred language, song selection, musical instruments, style of expression in worship and economic level. The signs, symbols and technologies employed all indicate that these groups have developed quite separate identities. Placed on the *Setswana-Sekgoa* continuum, it seems obvious that the HC leans towards the local or Setswana end, while GM is more strongly orientated towards the global or foreign. To a certain

degree this difference is also reflected in their concepts of the Godhead. As mentioned above, much of their theology corresponds with historic Christianity; however, upon closer inspection important differences emerge. In the HC, their theology seems to reflect the traditional understanding of God as creator of all things, good and evil, and therefore able to employ all creation, including the devil and his forces, to execute his will. The GM view directly contradicts this understanding with its dualistic two-kingdom theology where God is the author of all things good, and Satan the prince of evil and destruction.

The dualism adopted by NPCs fundamentally shapes their cosmology as it creates a situation where every aspect of life, spiritual or temporal, is perceived as a conflict between God and Satan. The ASCs, on the other hand, maintain a more holistic view of life, believing that God employs all manner of people, things and spiritual forces to accomplish his purposes. It is not surprising then that the warfare mentality found in churches like GM and BLM influences their images of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is a mighty victor who has conquered death and Satan, and confers power and protection on those who call on his name and depend on his shed blood. The Holy Spirit is portrayed as a dynamic force, even compared to dynamite or electricity, working in and through GM members. In HC theology, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are also depicted in powerful imagery, but there seems to be a more personal element, especially in their references to the love of Jesus and his saving/healing activity.

One other key difference between the HC and GM theologies is the HC use of “shining” or “glorious” (*o o galalelang*) as a descriptor for the Spirit instead of the more familiar “holy” (*o o boitshopo*). Within GM, the use of “holy” is consistent with their belief that the Spirit-filled life leads to pure and holy morals as well as success in all of one’s endeavors. On the other hand, the HC adjectives for the Spirit emphasize revelatory power that bursts upon the prophets and enables them to diagnose the underlying causes and treat the various problems brought to their church. An ethical lifestyle is also important to HC members but their focus is less on personal lifestyle decisions, and more on maintaining relationships. The HC use of a Setswana term not found in the

Hebrew Bible is significant, for it demonstrates the creative impulses at work in their effort to create a world of their own.

7.2.4.3 Hermeneutics

As mentioned above (7.2.3), a certain degree of similarity exists when one considers the HC and GM approach to hermeneutics. In both cases, they depend heavily upon Scripture to construct their ideologies, but it is clear that they do not approach the text with an empty slate. With their focus on experiential hermeneutics, their interpretations betray ideological interests on a regular basis. The Bible is both a resource from which to draw new ideas, as well as an indisputable authority to confirm their deeply held convictions. So, for example, the pivotal text for HC, Psalm 133, has become a key component in their spiritual (*semoya*) hermeneutic. The priority of harmonious relationships and the promotion of healing in difficult circumstances guides their preachers at all times. In a similar vein, the GM preoccupation with power for success leads them towards interpretations that emphasize personal development, spiritual victory and prosperity.

With both groups, one could argue that life experiences, their specific contexts, govern their approach to the biblical text. Their preachers are seeking to provide a relevant message for their congregations. HC members are largely drawn from the less educated, lower economic strata of Botswana society and are looking for a message that provides them with hope and healing in the midst of their struggles. GM members on the other hand are younger, better educated, and well aware of the opportunities offered in an urban setting. They want a message that promises victory and success in both temporal affairs (finances, health) as well as in their moral lives (pure lifestyle).

Interestingly, their hermeneutical emphases are dramatized by their choice of preachers and preaching style. Within GM, evidence of spiritual empowerment is necessary for one to preach. Therefore, preachers are drawn from church leadership, speak in tongues, have an impeccable reputation for moral uprightness, are well

educated and financially successful. Furthermore, they must prepare their sermons with copious biblical references. The HC emphasis on community participation creates a completely different situation as all church members are encouraged to comment on the biblical text. There is less concern for moral rectitude, intellectual capacity or previous preparation, as the Spirit is believed to work in all who are present. The consequence of their experiential hermeneutics is that even though these groups employ a similar approach to Scripture, their views of the world are considerably different.

7.2.4.4 Healing And Deliverance

The importance of the Spirit and the Bible for both groups is borne out in their approach to helping their followers experience physical and/or spiritual restoration. But this is also the area where a definite gulf in practice and perception has developed between them. The HC utilizes a whole range of material signs and symbols drawn from Setswana tradition, the Bible and Western Christianity in their elaborate healing rituals, whereas GM eschews nearly all physical objects and prefers to rely upon “word symbols” drawn from Scripture. Based on their theology, the HC believes that God can and does use physical disease or other difficulties to gain the attention of his children. Therefore, HC healing rituals require prophetic diagnosis before any treatment can be prescribed. Spiritual empowerment is critical throughout the process, as is the belief that God will intervene on the patient’s behalf. In order to inspire faith in all involved, various power media such as the Bible, water, ashes, ropes, strings, staffs, and burnt offerings are employed according to the direction of the Spirit as mediated through prophet-healers. Prayer, fasting, song, dance and the special agency of angels are believed to increase spiritual power and increase the likelihood of a life-promoting outcome.

GM deliverance rituals bear little resemblance to those experienced in the HC. Although prayer, song and reliance upon the Spirit feature prominently, the only power media in evidence are the amplified sound technology of the stage equipment, and the

occasional use of oil for anointing the sick. One feature in common between the two groups is their tendency to lay hands on those requesting help. It appears that both groups believe that the Spirit is mediated in a particular manner through direct human agency. However, GM does not believe prophetic inspiration is necessary for the diagnosis of the problem, but rather for the identification and exorcism of the spirit causing the problem. The GM dualistic cosmology is central in their deliverance ministry as they believe all ailments are a direct result of Satanic attack. As a result, GM leaders often call forward those who have a specific ailment, cast out demons in the “name of Jesus”, claim the “blood of Jesus” for spiritual protection, and challenge their followers to bask in the empowering “fire of God”.

7.2.4.5 Culture And Covenants

The contrast between ASC and NPC healing and deliverance rituals leads directly into the primary area of division between these groups: cultural adaptation and covenant-breaking. At this point especially, one finds both groups engaged in a complex cultural *bricolage* - drawing together, rejecting or modifying various signs, symbols and technologies in the construction of an ideology that meets their purposes. For the most part, the HC has accepted the Setswana understanding of the ancestors (*badimo*), traditional medicine, evil spirits and witchcraft. But that does not mean they have simply assumed these concepts into their worldview without significant modification. Jesus is now Saviour, Lord and Comforter, and the Bible has become their authoritative guide to life. New biblical figures such as angels and the devil play important roles in their cosmology. Although these beings may be viewed through the Setswana cultural lens, they cannot simply be equated with the ancestors. Without denying the reality of ancestral power, they now claim that the “glorious” Spirit has power far beyond anything the traditional doctors can muster. Therefore, their leaders replace the traditional doctors and infuse all rites of passage with biblical content in an effort to maintain their Setswana identity while relying upon the presence of God.

The creative synthesis of Setswana beliefs with biblical Christianity practiced by the HC is simply unacceptable in the eyes of NPCs. For GM, any attempt to “baptize” Setswana rites with Christian content is a dance with the devil. In their view, ancestral spirits are not deceased family members, nor are they angels in disguise, but rather demons out to enslave and destroy unsuspecting sinners. All traditional rites, symbols and medicinal artifacts are tainted by their association with the *badimo*, and traditional healers are identified as agents of the devil. The ASC willingness to allow their followers to participate in traditional rites, and their attempts to modify traditional healing practices including sacrifices, are viewed as clear evidence that they have yet to break demonic covenants established by their ancestors. Covenant-breaking deliverance rituals are a critical element in the new birth experience as one separates from past entanglements which may even include the rupture of familial relationships.

The hard-line approach adopted by GM in relation to rites and practices associated with the Setswana world does not extend to nearly the same degree into their view of Western culture. Although personal morals (especially sexual) are an especial concern of the church, they have largely accommodated the modern incursions of materialism, individualism and urbanism into their ideology. Having exorcised the spirit of poverty, they are now confident that the Holy Spirit will empower them to pursue personal and material success. In the HC one finds a much more cautious approach adopted in relation to Western influences. Economic development, education and employment creation are all valuable inasmuch as they benefit the entire community. Financial success is not expected, but if God chooses to bless an individual member, they know their role is to share with the rest of the community.

7.2.5 Distinctive Views Of The World

Both ASCs and NPCs have developed ideologies of power that are intended to meet the concerns of their followers. A wide variety of descriptions have been offered as explanations of their ministries: “coping healing” (Bate 1995), “political resistance and survival” (Dube 1996:126), “liberation” (Daneel 2004:194), or “the transformation of

human conditions and structures” (Kalu 2003b:90-91). Perhaps there is more than just one correct interpretation. To an outside observer, it appears that most HC members are lacking the necessary resources to succeed; they seem to exercise little or no control over the events of their lives. But they believe that the Spirit empowers them to approach the world in a different way than the ideologies presented by either Setswana culture or the Christianity presented by Western missionaries. In their effort to restore life in its fullness, the HC has appropriated many symbols and beliefs from the Setswana world, while modifying them in light of their interpretation of Scripture. Dreams, visions, prophetic words, diagnostic practices, protective apparatus and purging activities are all familiar to traditional healers, but under the guidance of the Spirit, they are now believed to fall under the authority of Jesus. That a certain amount of syncretism has taken place in this process is an unavoidable conclusion, but their focus on the centrality of prayer and faith in Christ emphasizes their biblical foundation. Through their use of Spirit-inspired “tactics”, one can argue that ASCs, like the HC and RBP, offer their members healing, engage in subtle forms of political and cultural resistance as well as liberate those held in bondage to both social and spiritual forces.

With respect to GM, one finds that their “spiritual warfare” outlook on the world provides them with an explanation for the difficulties in their lives, as well as promises them immediate power to overcome Satanic attacks. This ideology is particularly well-suited to meet the challenges of life in modern Gaborone with its opportunities for progress into a prosperous future. It can also account for the setbacks many people inevitably encounter as they struggle with finding employment, good housing, educational opportunities, proper health care or a suitable mate. Accessing the power promised through the church enables one to break free from the perceived constraints of Setswana culture as well as navigate the challenges and obstacles presented in a modern, more globalized urban context.

The “worlds” described and inhabited by the HC and GM are two significantly different attempts to come to terms with the ideologies offered by a reified view of traditional Setswana culture, Western Christianity and the globalizing forces of

modernity. It is unfair to characterize the HC as stuck in the past, while GM forges ahead into a progressive future. Neither is it accurate to argue that GM has rejected its Setswana identity and simply capitulated to a Western agenda. Both churches offer ideologies that span the Setswana-Western continuum. But that does not place them in the same camp. At critical junctures, they part ways. In particular, the HC willingness to include the *badimo* (ancestors) in their community, while GM exorcises the *badimo* from theirs, establishes a clear boundary between them. Likewise, the GM promotion of a Western-inspired message of individual prosperity stands in stark contrast to the HC focus on sharing wealth in community. The distinctive elements of each movement preclude them from being placed in the same category of the Christian family, and yet they have much to teach the global church about mission.

7.3 The Missiological Imperative: Contextualization

7.3.1 Contextualization And Syncretism

One of the critical missiological issues raised within this study is contextualization of the gospel message within contemporary Botswana. I have attempted to demonstrate the great creativity displayed by ASCs and NPCs as they have interacted with the various socio-cultural forces swirling around them. David Bosch (1991:417, 423) highlighted the significance of contextualization for missiological reflection when he argued that “authentic evangelism” as well as “*all* theology” must be contextual.² Understanding the complex relationship between cultures and the biblical gospel is critical, especially when considering the global scope of contemporary Christianity and the growing reality of cultural hybridity.³ Missiologist Peter Phan (2003:xii) has even

² Although the terms inculturation, indigenization and contextualization are often used interchangeably, I prefer to use the term contextualization due to its more all-encompassing nature. According to Bevans (1992:21), “the term contextualization includes all that is implied in the older indigenization or inculturation, but seeks to include the realities of contemporary secularity, technology, and the struggle for human justice”.

³ The significance of multiple cultures impinging on one another is described by anthropologist Ted Lewellen (in Hiebert 2008:263): “Globalization is impacting people everywhere by erasing local boundaries and transforming identities. Restrictive categories like tribal, peasant, community, local and even culture are giving way to terms that empathize blending, plasticity and ongoing identity-construction: ethnic, hybrid, creole, national and transnational”.

gone so far as to claim that contextualization will be “the most urgent and most controversial issue in mission for decades to come”. Having been engaged in an effort to contextualize Christianity right from their inception, the distinctive features of ASC and NPC Christianity may prove instructive for the global church family.

Not long after its introduction as a missiological term in 1972, mission practitioners and theologians began to articulate their anxieties regarding the limits of contextualization. How to safeguard the essentials of the gospel message from the inroads of insidious syncretism became paramount.⁴ In response, some argued for “critical contextualization” (Hiebert 1987), while others opted for an attempt to produce “appropriate Christianity” (Kraft 2005) to counteract an over-emphasis on the context. While this concern is legitimate, it also appears that a “concern for theological purity” is often related to maintaining power, as attempts to couch the biblical message in local forms often threaten the interests of established ecclesiastical authorities. In the past, syncretism has been almost uniformly viewed in a negative light due to the belief that it represented an “*illegitimate mingling* of different religious elements” (Pato 1990:25-26). But that notion is rapidly being replaced by the realization that some sort of syncretism or synthesis is an inevitable element of faith formation (Jennings 2006:164).⁵

Harvey Cox has argued that it is precisely the Pentecostal ability to communicate their message in a contextualized manner that has enabled them to grow so quickly, in so many locations. He (1995:218-219) makes obvious the need for linking elements of the past and future, local and foreign, in contemporary missional efforts:

For any religion to grow in today’s world, it must possess two capabilities: it must be able to include and transform at least certain elements of preexisting religions

⁴ The following definitions illustrate the tendency to focus on the corrupting nature of syncretism. “[T]he mixing of different beliefs and practices in ways that distort the truth and power of the gospel” (Hiebert et al. 1999:13). “Syncretism, then, is the conscious or unconscious reshaping of Christian plausibility structures, beliefs, and practices through cultural accommodation so that they reflect those of the dominant culture” (Van Rheenen 2006:7).

⁵ Latin American theologian Juan Sepulveda (in Anderson 1999:228) challenges the negative perception of syncretism by reminding Christians that the gospel always arrives in some cultural form. Accordingly, “we cannot grasp any meaning without the help of our precious cultural categories, “ and so “purity’ is not given to us. Some sort of syncretism *is* inevitable”.

which still retain a strong grip on the cultural subconscious. It must also equip people to live in rapidly changing societies where personal responsibility and inventiveness, skills associated with a democratic polity and an entrepreneurial economy, are indispensable.

In both ASC and NPC movements, their “freedom in the Spirit” has generated a built-in flexibility which has helped them adapt easily to a variety of cultural and social contexts (Anderson 2004a:236). They have incorporated what Max Stackhouse (in Bosch 1991:431) has referred to as *poiesis* into the dialectical relationship between theory and praxis. Drawing on a variety of resources, the Spirit has become their inspiration for “imaginative creation or representation of evocative images”. But the question must be asked: if the highly personal experience of spiritual guidance is authoritative, how does church leadership determine if the revelation really is from God?

This discussion is especially pertinent for ASCs due to their conscious and unconscious efforts to practice contextualization “from below”. These churches are believed to have “adopted a radical and unapologetic hybridity as a stance of resistance and continue to hold this stance” (Dube 2002:53).⁶ It is precisely their ability to develop an ideology which takes the African cosmology into account, instead of viewing it as “ignorant superstition,” that has enabled them to impact the lives of so many Africans. Their efforts have been applauded by many as “a genuine process of *contextualization*” (Daneel 1984:67; also Schreiter 1985:145). Similar claims have been made concerning NPC efforts to present a gospel message that helps young African urbanites make sense of rapid social change. These commentators argue that they do not represent an “Africanization of American Christianity” (Anderson 2002:183), but are actually “of the soil of Africa, which is like that on which Jesus walked” (Kalu 2000a:140).

The level of contextualization displayed by both ASCs and NPCs is highly noteworthy; but their close identification with the Botswana context has raised questions. Even as missiologists recognize the “infinitely translatable” and “indigenizing” dynamic present within the Christian gospel, Andrew Walls (1996b:8) has argued that there is a “pilgrim” principle as well.

⁶ Pato (1990:26) and Thomas (1997:19) espouse similar views.

[T]o be faithful to Christ will put him out of step with his society; for that society never existed, in East or West, ancient time or modern, which could absorb the word of Christ painlessly into its system. Jesus within Jewish culture, Paul within Hellenistic culture, take it for granted that there will be rubs and friction—not from the adoption of a new culture, but from the transformation of the mind towards that of Christ.

Good contextualization must lead toward greater fidelity to Jesus and the development of a community whose narrative identity is drawn from the New Testament (Newbigin 1989:153-154). It is with these thoughts in mind that I turn to some of the key questions raised in my analysis of the ASC and NPC relationship.

7.3.2 Relating To The Ancestors

No matter how much one wishes that the thorny questions surrounding the identity and role of the ancestors had been resolved, this remains as one of, if not *the*, primary stumbling blocks in ASC and NPC relations. Three options were articulated during the course of this study: (1) the traditional identification of ancestors with deceased family members; (2) angels disguised as deceased family members in order to minimize the fear engendered by an encounter with the supernatural; and (3) demons disguised as deceased family members in order to deceive and enslave. The first two possibilities were aired by ASC members, while the last was the opinion declared most frequently by NPC followers. A follow-up question has to do with the relationship between the ancestors and Christ. Does the ASC willingness to make requests of the ancestors imply a less than complete commitment to the Lordship of Christ? If the ancestors are viewed as subordinate intermediaries between the believer and Jesus, is this a problem?

Allan Anderson (1995:289) raised a similar question some time ago: “Why have some churches rejected the ancestor cult whilst others adopt a certain ambivalence towards it, and still others accommodate it?” In my analysis of the HC and RBP, all of the approaches listed by Anderson were in evidence to one degree or another, depending on the person and the circumstance. These are difficult questions to answer because of the fluidity of religious symbolism. The strength of ASCs is their

dependence on symbolism and orality, leading to an inherent flexibility to absorb numerous points of view. But as Martin West (1975:173) noted years ago, “this very flexibility makes accurate analysis extremely difficult”.

At the same time, the simple identification of the *badimo* as demonic spirits is far from satisfactory. Oftentimes ASC members report dreams where their ancestors provided valuable instruction or challenged them to repent of their misdeeds. I would argue that much work must still be done to develop a more holistic “theology of the invisible” (Hiebert et al. 1999:371).

A theology of the invisible must take seriously a Trinitarian understanding of God, who is continually involved in his creation by his providence, presence, and power. It must take angels seriously, for they are God’s ministers on earth, and it must take Satan and demons seriously, for they are fallen angels seeking to keep people from turning to God in repentance and faith.

A critical component in this endeavor is a willingness to listen and incorporate the insights of the entire community, not just those in positions of authority. There are ASCs in southern Africa that accept the traditional understanding of the ancestors, believe in angelic beings, and yet manage to bring all of these figures under the Lordship of Christ (Pretorius 1993:100-101).⁷ It would appear that the HC is moving in that direction.

7.3.3 Power Media And Experiential Hermeneutics

The ASC fondness for utilizing material objects as power media as well as the NPC penchant for using stock phrases drawn from the Bible also appears at times to veer into the quasi-magical. Does the use of these signs and symbols foster a greater reliance on God, or lead needy people into a desperate quest for the “right” formula for healing or deliverance? Although both of these practices have precedent in Setswana spirituality, one wonders if this is a good example of contextualization. Outside

⁷ Pretorius (1993:101) reports that members of Zion Apostolic Church in Zion of South Africa do not confuse ancestral spirits with angels, and are surprised to hear of churches that do so. According to this church, “[d]reams of angels do happen and these are related and explained by a leader during a church gathering”.

observers must be careful not to impose an artificial separation of 'form' and 'content' upon these phenomena (Strauss 2006:117-118). It would seem that here again one needs to examine whether or not church members are encouraged to grow in their relationship with Jesus and his people through these forms of ritual. "Christianity is based on worship and relationships. Prayer is magic if supplicants believe they must say the right things in the right tone of voice accompanied by certain right actions to be assured of the right answers" (Hiebert et al. 1999:378). Before making hasty judgments, it is critical to listen to ASC and NPC practitioners and recognize their deliberate attempts to provide a biblical rationale for all of their prophetic and healing activities.

The experiential emphasis present in both ASC and NPC hermeneutics has both a positive and a negative element. Their discontent with theoretical responses to issues needing immediate attention along with a desire to witness the Spirit of God work powerfully among them is surely understandable. It is also a major attraction for the unchurched. But with their focus on spiritual "revelation", how does one avoid making the Bible say whatever one wants? Everyone reads the Bible selectively, emphasizing certain ideas based on their life experience. But even so, one needs to ask how churches can ensure that God's voice is not being obscured by the preacher or prophet? One of the more interesting features of the HC and GM ideological constructs is the manner in which their understanding of God tends to reflect their self-identity. One might even be tempted to ask if they have created God in their image, or if their identity reflects the image of God? Both the HC and GM understand the need to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 Jn. 4:1), but for this to occur, an ecumenical dialogue between diverse churches is necessary (Hollenweger 1999b:186).

7.3.4 Orality And The Vernacular

The previous discussion concerning the relationship between biblical interpretation and experience is closely linked to the significance of orality and vernacular use in endeavors to contextualize. Here one might ask if Setswana must

serve as the primary language for the communication of the gospel in Botswana in order for contextualization to be considered authentic. Lamin Sanneh (2003:10) has championed the role of Bible translation as fundamental to preserving and promoting indigenous cultures: “The fact that Bible translation adopted into its canon the indigenous names for God implied at the minimum a tacit rejection of the standard monotheism-polytheism dichotomy of evolutionary thought, and opened the way for indigenous innovation and motivation in the religious life”. His arguments are impressive but as the discussion concerning the *badimo* (ancestors) demonstrated (see 2.3.2), not all translation efforts have endorsed indigenous beliefs and values. Nevertheless, the ambiguities created by the ASC reliance upon orality have proven to be a particularly effective tactic in their struggle to maintain the values they hold dear.

Furthermore the ASC retention of Setswana has not only reinforced their African identity but it has also created space for a broader range of meaning when interpreting biblical texts. Clearly, one of the major stumbling blocks in ASC-NPC relations is the problem of communication. How significant is the difference between “Holy Spirit” and “Shining Spirit” (*Moya o o Galalelang*)? Do ASC members “make requests of” or “pray to” the ancestors (*go rapela badimo*)? What about the definition of “angels,” and why do Batswana ASCs prefer the Sesotho term (*lenyelo*) to the perfectly good Setswana equivalent (*moengele*)? Even a fundamental value like “peace” (*kagiso*) encompasses a much broader semantic range than its English equivalent. Anthropologist Paul Hiebert (1989:110) clarifies the significance of choosing one language over another. “The ability to control the definitions of words that the people use is one of the greatest powers dominant groups in a society have, for in controlling definitions, they control the way people see reality”. With these words, we have once again returned to Foucault’s discussion of the production of truth and the exercise of power. The NPC usage of English is not just a matter of communicating the gospel; it declares their intention to connect to the wider world, while the ASC usage of Setswana asserts their desire to stay rooted in Botswana.

7.3.5 The Nature Of Discipleship

The ASC accusation that NPCs have abandoned their African identity in favour of a Western ideology raises the question of how one defines an African Christian identity. Some contend that Africanism suggests the need to promote the well-being and interests of Africans at home and abroad, refusing to be subjected to foreign domination. This view allows for borrowing from other cultures if it will help Africans succeed. For others, the promotion of Africa demands the endorsement of traditional African values, cultures and languages (see Garner 2004b:207). NPC leaders argue they are pro-African because their ideology of Spirit power enables Africans to stand up confidently as they exert a positive influence in both local and global affairs. ASCs, on the other hand, maintain that one cannot reject or demonize aspects of one's culture the way NPCs do, and still remain fully committed to African values, ideals and aspirations.

According to some commentators, "Pentecostalism thrives because it taps into an innate African spirituality" (Hanciles 2008:86); but what is "African spirituality"? Tinyiko Maluleke's critique (1996a:20) is surely applicable at this point: "A serious weakness in the approach described so far is the apparent denial of hybridity, dynamism of, and the sometimes embarrassing as well as painful interdependence between African and Western cultures". Throughout this study I have attempted to demonstrate the manner in which both ASCs and NPCs have been involved in a struggle to "resist" the hegemonic tendencies of Westernism, while also trying to come to terms with a reified Setswana ideology. Although one can legitimately ask if NPCs are succumbing to the globalizing power of Western culture, and falling back into the old trap of becoming "cultured" (in other words, forced into the Western mold), one must also recognize their ability to help their followers succeed in a difficult context. Dealing with the African past is critically important, but the present and future must also be faced.

The NPC commitment to follow Christ alone is certainly praiseworthy. Jesus said that we must be "born again" if we want to see the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3), and he

also warned his disciples about the possibility of painful divisions in families if they chose to follow him (Mt. 10:32-39). But one wonders if the NPC demonization of most things stemming from traditional Setswana rites, and their dismissal of many family obligations, is really necessary? It would appear that NPCs seem unwilling to accept the fundamental shift in faith allegiance evident in the testimonies of people such as Archbishop Madimabe and his deputy, Isaak Tsholofelo. The Willowbank Report from the Lausanne Conference on World Evangelism challenges the NPC view: "Conversion to Christ does not mean the destruction or unmaking of a given culture but rather the remaking or transforming of that culture into a culture which accepts the Lordship of Christ and serves him" (in Katoke 1984:10). The process of transformation is not nearly complete in the ASCs studied (nor has it occurred anywhere else), but surely one can acknowledge what the Spirit of God has already done.

Similar to the question above concerning African identity is the issue of Christian identity. Which of these groups is "more" Christian, and how can that be defined? Trying to answer this question returns us to the introductory chapter and Saayman's delineation of the evangelizing, healing and justice orientation of Jesus' groundbreaking message in Luke 4:18-19. What really is taking place in these churches? Are people being drawn to Jesus, and are their lives, along with the communities in which they live, being transformed by their encounter with the Spirit of God? Once again, I defer to the wisdom of David Bosch (1991:430-431):

Where people are experiencing and working for justice, freedom, community, reconciliation, unity, and truth, in a spirit of love and selflessness, we may dare to see God at work. Wherever people are being enslaved, enmity between humans is fanned, and mutual accountability is denied in a spirit of individual or communal self-centrism, we may identify the counter-forces of God's reign at work.

I am unable, and nor do I want, to judge which group is "more" Christian, but serious questions still remain, such as: can a Christian ideology that is largely focused on individual success really be considered as contextualized for Africa?⁸ If church

⁸ Ghanaian Emmanuel Asante (2001:364) would clearly answer in the negative: "The gospel can hardly be proclaimed in the traditional African context as an invitation to come out from the community. The gospel must rather come to the African as an invitation to experience newness and fullness of life in community".

members still depend on ancestors and angels to provide their basic needs, is Jesus Lord of their lives? In both of these Christian movements there is need for a humble admission that God has begun a “good work”, but the Spirit’s transforming work has yet to be completed (see Phil. 1:6).

7.4 Conclusion

This dissertation has dealt with the relationship between the ASC and NPC movements, and argued that the two have developed unique “worlds of the Spirit”. However I do not believe these differences should preclude them from jointly participating in the *missio Dei*. There are too many critical issues in Botswana and the broader region that require a united Christian response. Obvious examples are the ongoing HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the need to work with Zimbabwean refugees due to the political unrest in that country. The Christian imperative to reconcile and work together in mission is unambiguous from Jesus’ prayer for unity found in John 17:22-23.

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you loved me (NIV).

True ecumenism recognizes the differences between churches, and still values their distinctive features.⁹

As discussed above, there is a real danger for churches to allow their specific ideology to become the controlling paradigm for how they interpret all biblical texts. Christian maturity exhibits a certain amount of healthy suspicion of one’s own understanding, and a willingness to listen to the views of others. In this process, churches may recover the original meaning of the text and open the doors for renewal and revival as the Spirit works among them. For true intercultural theologizing to

⁹ Although stated in a slightly different context, Tinyiko Maluleke’s comments are still highly pertinent to this discussion: “In like manner, we must respond to those who are either trying to exaggerate similarities between various African theologies, or to replace all previous African theologies with one all-encompassing theological paradigm, by indicating that African Christianity need not have “one” Christian theology in order to be valid and authentic” (2005a:485).

happen, there needs to be respectful dialogue between churches of different cultures, between different socio-educational levels, different theological traditions, and with the church of past generations (Strauss 2006:119-123). This is no easy task; for as this study has demonstrated repeatedly, relations of power have often undermined this process in the past. Humility requires an admission that there is more to learn and experience of God, and that the Spirit of God may want to teach us something new through other churches and individuals.

At a very basic level, it appears that the NPC ideology of spiritual empowerment is having a significant impact in the lives of many of their followers. New believers have been encouraged to take risks, believing that the Spirit of God will help them overcome the obstacles that previously kept them enslaved by fear. Turning to ASCs, it has long been recognized that these churches have created a place for people to experience the love and grace of God in the midst of harsh and sometimes dehumanizing conditions. They have provided their followers with an ideology that allows them to retain their African identity while seeking to learn what it means to follow Jesus in a changing world. If these groups could sit down to share with one another how they sense God is working in their congregations, it might well lead to new initiatives and greater mission service within their spheres of influence. Too often fear and mistrust are allowed to dictate interactions between these groups, when what is needed are courageous leaders who seek out opportunities to listen to one another and build relationships based on a desire to engage faithfully in the mission of God.

In keeping with the penchant for narrative found in both ASC and NPC circles, I conclude this study with an account of some significant interactions that took place during the course of my fieldwork in July 2007. One Saturday I had made arrangements to travel from Gaborone to the village of Sefophe in order to spend the weekend with my HC friends (a 430 km trip). Upon boarding the bus, I immediately began conversing with two vendors. Once they discovered my involvement with ASCs, they revealed their membership in the Eloi Christian Church, an energetic group founded in eastern Botswana. When I recounted my visit to their church headquarters

in the village of Tsetsejwe during Easter of 1994, and my friendship with some of their leaders, they enthusiastically accepted me as an older brother. Once again, I was amazed at the readiness of ASC members to welcome visitors into their community with little or no hesitation.

But this was just the beginning of my adventure. Once the bus departed, a young woman in the seat behind me asked (in English) if I really was a pastor. I replied in the affirmative and asked what church she attended. She boldly declared that she was a member of Bible Life Ministries, one of the largest churches in Botswana. Now here was an interesting coincidence. It just so happens that I had spent 4 months at the beginning of 2002 researching this church as to the reasons for its amazing growth. When I told her this, she looked a little surprised and suspicious since her church regularly denounced ASC activities and she had just overheard my conversation with the ASC vendors. However, after listing the names of various leaders of her church and sharing what I had learned while interviewing them, it became clear to her that I actually did have a relationship with her church. Having gained her confidence, the next four hours of travel were filled with fascinating conversation.

I soon learned that this engaging 23 year old young woman was going home to prepare for her wedding. Recently graduated with a BA in political science from the University of Botswana, she was going to wed her fiancée, a medical student who had been studying in Pune, India. Following their marriage, they would return to India together so that her new husband could complete his studies. She was very excited about her marriage. She told me that they had met at Bible Life, stayed sexually celibate and now they were ready to move forward into a promising future. When I also asked her why she liked her church, her answer was simple. It is Christ-centered with a focus on excellence in all aspects of life. Church leaders challenge Christians to take hold of God's power so that they might experience the full and abundant life, and make a difference in the world around them.

We also discussed at length my connections with African Spiritual Churches. She had never visited one, and she wanted to know if I believed that people in those churches were actually “born again”. I simply shared my experiences of studying the Bible with many different people, and explained to her how church members had shown me the love of God and tried to display the way of Jesus in their lives. She asked many questions and the time passed quickly. When we transferred buses for the last leg of our journeys, I gave her a blessing for her marriage, and left feeling very confident about what lay ahead for this highly intelligent, friendly young woman.

I travelled the final 30 kilometers to Sefophe in an older, dilapidated bus and the trip seemed to drag on interminably. It was late in the afternoon when I finally stepped out of the bus and began the trek to the Archbishop’s home. He was expecting me and while I was still a long way off, he came out to greet me with a large retinue of family members. When we met, he hugged me, his wife beamed with happiness, the grandchildren giggled while hiding behind their mothers and I simply basked in their warm embrace. Immediately we went on a tour of their new church building, as well as the large bowl-shaped concrete altar they had recently constructed. Walking out of the church yard, we went to greet the second wife of the Archbishop. Unfortunately, in this home, signs of AIDS abounded with two of the adult children quite ill. As we walked back to the “first home”, the sun began to set.

We sat down in the courtyard and began to chat. The air became cooler so we moved closer to the fire, and slowly drank our tea. After dinner, the Archbishop and other leaders went to care for someone in a neighboring village who had been bewitched so I was left by the fire with his daughters and grandchildren. It was now very dark; there was no moon and the stars shone brilliantly in the cold, winter sky. I asked the young women about their favorite songs, and we started to sing hymns from *Lifela tsa Sione* (Hymns of Zion). It was quite beautiful. No one had a hymnbook of course and it would not have helped if we had, for it was much too dark to read. When the Archbishop returned, he called us all to enter the church building for a short service. It was just a chance to greet one another properly, pray together and then sing and

dance for a while. I removed my shoes and followed the 70 year old Archbishop into the circle and began to dance along with my brothers and sisters. We went faster and faster, and then suddenly it was over. We all dropped to our knees and amidst the din, I heard prayers of thanksgiving, hope and longing for blessing, reconciliation and healing. As we filed out of the church, we exchanged one last mutual blessing. The day was done – it was cold, and so while church members quickly made their way to their nearby homes, I was escorted to my room and given the best bed in the family compound!

I have included this account at the conclusion of this project as a brief illustration of what I believe both these movements have to offer Botswana society. The young woman I met from BLM has experienced the Spirit's power in her life and she is determined to make a difference in the world. Undeterred by forces spiritual or temporal, she believes God will help her succeed. My experience at the Hermon Church was also a demonstration of spiritual power – the power to love and welcome all who come looking for help. They believe that the Spirit of God enables them to maintain the bonds of family and community, while trying to make sense of the conflicting values promoted through the media, education and business. Both ASCs and NPCs have been forced to deal with the reality of a rapidly changing socio-cultural context, and they are seeking to provide their followers with spiritual resources that will enable them to live well. Is a combination of the best of these movements possible? Spiritual empowerment so that one can confidently explore the opportunities offered in a new “glocalized” world in order to advance the reign of God, while also retaining a strong focus on inclusive community and caring relationships, is a potent combination. This message would seem to be at the core of the good news Jesus announced.

These dynamic movements are exploring the exciting, perplexing, and always challenging, territory between cultures and ideologies. They believe that the Bible and the Spirit are helping them interpret the ideas and forces before them, and guiding them on their quest to follow Jesus faithfully. Near the end of a long conversation, RBP pastor Jacob Serumola highlighted the tensions between cultural constructions of the gospel and the essential person of Jesus Christ: “The way of God is neither

English/Western (*Sekgoa*) nor Setswana/African (*Setswana*); the important thing is faith in Jesus”.¹⁰ Lesslie Newbigin (1989:153) would certainly concur with that assessment:

The content of the gospel is Jesus Christ in the fullness of his ministry, death, and resurrection. The gospel is this and not anything else. Jesus is who he is, and though our perceptions of him will be shaped by our own situation and the mental formation we have received from our culture, our need is to see him as he truly is. This is why we have to listen to the witness of the whole Church of all places and ages.

Newbigin’s final point is crucial for all churches in all locations in the world. My hope and prayer is that this study has shed some light on the heart and soul of these movements so that we all – ASCs, NPCs, Christians of all persuasions – might “walk in the Spirit” together as we more passionately and effectively participate in the *missio Dei*.

¹⁰ Personal Interview (19 June 2005).

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESPONSES

I. Churches

a) Church name: Hermon Church
Location: Sefhophe (23); Gaborone (2)

b) Church name: Revelation Blessed Peace
Location: Gaborone (10); Kgagodi (3)

c) Church name: Goodnews Ministries
Location: Gaborone (20); Francistown (11)

d) Church name: Bible Life Ministries
Location: Gaborone (45)

II. Personal History with Church

1. How long have you attended this church? (Answers in number of years)
2. What attracted you to visit this church the first time?
3. Has there been a difference in your life since you began attending your church?
4. If so, what has been the difference in your life?
5. How often do you attend this church in a week?
6. Do you have a ministry position in this church?
7. What is your ministry position?
8. Did you attend any other church previously?
9. Why did you leave that church?

III. Salvation

10. Are you a Christian?
11. How do you know if a person is a Christian?

12. Have you been water baptized?

IV. Evangelism

13. Is every member of your church a Christian?

14. Is it important to evangelize others?

15. Why or why not?

16. Do you practice evangelism?

17. If so, what are some of the ways you do so?

18. Have you ever brought new people to your church?

V. Holy Spirit/Spiritual Power

19. Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit?

20. How do you know if you have?

21. Do you speak in tongues?

22. How does speaking in tongues help you?

23. Have you ever been “seized by the Spirit”?

24. Does prophecy take place in your church?

25. Have you ever had a vision from the Spirit?

26. Have you ever been healed in this church?

27. If yes, from what problem were you healed?

28. What are some of the ways that your church practices healing?

29. Can a person with AIDS be healed?

30. Do you know anyone who has been healed of AIDS?

31. Are there physical objects which have spiritual power – can heal, protect or harm an individual?

32. What are they?

33. How does one obtain or receive spiritual power?

VI. Witchcraft/Spiritual Warfare

34. Have you ever been troubled by a witch or evil spirit?

35. Can Christians be protected from witches/evil spirits?

36. If so, how?

VII. Angels

37. Do you have personal angel helping you?

38. Have you ever prayed to an angel to help you?

39. Does your church have an angel or angels watching over it?

VIII. Spiritual Disciplines

40. Describe the importance of prayer in your life.

41. Is it important to pray in “the name of Jesus”?

42. Why is it important to pray in “the name of Jesus”?

43. Is fasting important in your life?

44. Why is fasting important?

45. In what ways does the Bible help you?

IX. Setswana Culture

46. Does Setswana culture ever conflict with your church’s teaching?

47. If yes, in what ways?

48. Can one’s deceased relatives communicate with the living?

49. If you had a dream, and your deceased grandfather appeared in it, instructing you to do something, what would you do?

50. Is it acceptable to “*go phasa/phekola badimo*” (honor ancestors with an animal sacrifice)?

51. Why or why not?

52. Is there a difference between the spiritual power of your church and that of a traditional healer (*ngaka ya Setswana*)?

53. If yes, what is the difference?

X. Lifestyle

54. Is drinking alcohol always wrong (even traditional beer)?

55. Is sex outside of marriage always wrong?

56. What is the most important command in the Bible?

57. Does Western culture ever conflict with your church's teaching?

58. If yes, in what way?

XI. Finances

59. Does God promise to help Christians prosper financially?

60. What per cent of your income do you give to the church each month?

61. Do you believe that the more you give, the more you will receive?

XII. Church Leadership

62. What's the most important characteristic of a church leader?

63. Does it matter how old someone is when choosing a church leader?

64. Can women provide leadership in the church?

XII. Covenants

65. Is it important to break covenants made before a person became a Christian?
66. Is it important to verbally confess the promises of God so that you may be blessed or healed?
67. Do you believe God has a specific plan for your life?
68. Do you think things will get better in your future?
69. Why or why not?

XIII. Information About the Congregation:

70. Personal Details:

Sex:

Age:

Nationality:

Are you married, single, widowed or divorced?

Do you have children?

Employment:

Highest Education Level:

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