

Power struggles, poverty and breakaways in the African Independent Churches in South Africa

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Abstract

This article will address the historical tensions that the impoverished state of many African Independent Churches (AICs) caused in South Africa. Such tensions have often led to divisions and breakaways within the AIC denominational structures. Of note here is the fact that many such breakaways were the result of, among other things, spiritual doctrinal differences, internal politics, hunger, status issues and financial squabbles. This article investigates the reasons for division. Accordingly, the article notes that many of the people who were at the centre of these splits joined the church with ulterior motives, both spiritual and physical, depending on their interests. In time, even major AICs in South Africa were not immune to the divisions resulting from internal conflict. This article considers questions such as: Can divisions be viewed as a problem or a way of life for the AICs? Can breakaways be prevented? What effect do divisions among the AICs have on their growth, bearing in mind that they are the fastest growing churches in Africa today? The article will consider these important questions in order to ascertain whether, historically, money has been the main factor in their breakaways.

Introduction

Power struggles and poverty among the African Independent Churches (AICs) in South Africa have resulted in serious antagonism and prejudice, which eventually led to many breakaways among them. Although these divisions did not happen overnight, such events have happened repeatedly over many decades (approximately 120 years) since the formation of the AICs. There are many causes for the tensions resulting in breakaways among the AICs. Some of these causes include the struggle against apartheid, migrant labour, lack of housing, unemployment and poverty. These social conditions did not affect the AICs alone; they were also common to the

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general population of black South Africa. This general population included all people of colour in the rural areas, townships and hostels where poverty thrived.

In urban areas in particular, meagre resources and lack of space were some of the causes of constant restlessness and conflict among this population. Historically, the struggle for leadership and inadequate funds among the AICs were key frustrations, with disagreements over financial aid and disputes within the churches resulting in resentment among the Zionists and apostolic groups.

Lack of resources has had a deleterious effect on the image of the AICs. Many attempts at development, including education, have been beset with obstacles. Although many of the AICs in South Africa were affiliated to the Organisation of the African Independent Churches in Africa (OAIC), with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, it could not help its members (AICs) to reduce poverty, suffering and illiteracy in Africa.¹ However, since 2005 there was a great interest for reviving OAIC's vision for active development; and this has become clearer in the 2009 document entitled "OAIC visions for a better world abundant: life for all in community" (Molobi 2006:44). This article will, to a large extent, be confined to the South African context. We will approach the problem of power struggle and poverty from the perspective of the means resources that are at the AIC's disposal for the purposes of survival. The historical observation and the active participation methods seem relevant for exploring this topic. While the article deals with power struggle and poverty, it is important to also highlight various factors that have led to these developments in these churches. For example, the historical developments of the AICs need to be understood from the break-up perspective.

Formation of the AICs from a cessation viewpoint

This background is important to highlight the author's intention in writing this article. From 1882 onwards, large-scale secession took place from almost all churches and missions. The movement accelerated after 1927 and again after 1945, until by 1966, AIC membership increased to over three million (Barrett 1968:23). Because of the sheer size of the movement the problems that emerged from within the movement were too much to handle. The movement has been documented in greater detail elsewhere, as the government has files on all bodies. Several attempts over the decades have been made to organise these thousands of groups into federations, and since 1965 few have had marked success. As a result of these attempts, the African

¹ OAIC was not a funding organisation and many grassroots members of the AICs mistaken it for that. It was mainly intended for ecumenical and unity purposes.

Independent Churches Association (AICA) and the Assembly of Zionists and Apostolic Churches were formed (Barrett 1968:23).

We could also add that Karamanga (2000:74) warned that the role of Christian councils or associations should be to benefit from our intelligence and theological efforts, but there should not be unity at the expense of others, nor unity where others feel that they have arrived, expecting the remnant to join subsequently, nor unity among the clergy without the laity, nor unity among men without women, nor unity among the rich in the absence of the poor, but unity for mission, for God's purpose in the world. However, this seems not to be the case. It should, however, be understood that the AICs² were from the beginning defined as part of the indigenous church and, as Soltau (1963:20–25) stated, they were influenced by the spirit of self-government, self-support,³ and self-propagation. For the sake of this article the issue of self-support is singled out as it deals directly with the use of funds for the following reasons:

- Self-support is essential in order to establish strong churches and for the people to begin to realise that the churches are theirs.
- It suggests no mission funds for pastors and no mission money for church properties.
- Lastly, that there will be no mission money for evangelism.

Having said this we should also look into the vastness of this movement. It will make no sense if we try to assess the power and financial struggle of the AIC in isolation. In the past there were several associations operating in South Africa under the cover of AICs. Some of them were visible and stronger in various areas, including finance. This will be outlined in the following section on the historical tensions and poverty among the AICs.

Historical tensions that the state of poverty caused among AICs in South Africa

The focus of this article starts with the 1960s, keeping in mind that the history of the AICs stretches way back to the 1890s and beyond. The liberation movements, such as the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), the Azania Peoples Organisation (AZAPO) and the African National

² AICs are the prototypes of the mainline churches and here we merely want to indicate how they have acquired their independent status and also how they have developed on their own since then.

³ I should immediately indicate that though the spirit of self support was instilled, it remained a concern that the OAIC could not support its church member affiliates simply because it was not founded for that purpose but rather to unite the AICs across the African continent.

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Congress (ANC) were the loudest social voices in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. At that time, the AICs were advised⁴ to reorganise themselves even theologically into meaningful organisations. They were encouraged to address issues of faction fighting, scholarship, educational syllabi and unity, and the building of centres, nursery schools and experimental farms (Khoapa 1972:31). In those days churches had to be registered with the Department of Public Works, although the government did not finance them.

Around 1960, three major associations were identified: the African Independent Association (AICA), the Reformed Independent Churches Association (RICA) and the Assembly of the Zionitic and Apostolic Association (AZASA) (Khoapa 1972:32). All of these groups have experienced divisions which were caused by mal-administered funds they contributed and funding from abroad. On both occasions reports were not accounted for and resulted in ongoing conflict and accusations that led to splits. By the way, it should be clarified here that these associations comprised thousands of members of the ordinary AIC denominations as affiliates. We highlight that when mentioning these associates we are automatically suggesting the number of affiliates to them, who are mostly ordinary and poor (Ntsuntsha 2005:14–15). Indeed, even those who profess theological education are from the grassroots level.

Among all the groups that we have mentioned, AICA remained outstanding according to the late Archbishop Ngada. He indicated that AICA attempted unity and the Christian Institute (CI) with its charismatic leader, Dr. Beyers Naude assisted it in 1965. Its greatest achievement was the bringing together of 460 of the AICs across their diversity (Ngada 2001:19–20). This association had its roots in the first ever African church association called the Transvaal Interdenominational African Ministers Association (TIAMA), which was formed under the tutelage of white churches in 1915. The association was open to both blacks and whites but soon divided between white missionaries and independent ministers. Mission church ministers were in the majority and at no time did the independent church leaders hold any office in the association.

The membership of the association had no restrictions in terms of the untrained African ministers. Nevertheless, divergent views and opinions opened a wide gap between the trained and untrained ministers. Some African ministers trained under the European churches allowed no facilities to other deserving causes (West 1975:143).⁵ A show-off on education and a better theological training of these African ministers under white churches led to the formation of a pure African Independent Church Movement, which

⁴ See the introduction of Khoapa's book "Black review": 1972 edition published by Ravan (see details of publishers also in bibliography).

⁵ This statement here is referring to sharing from those who had the opportunities to secure sponsors and manage to erect buildings.

was established in 1922. This consisted of ministers determined to have their own association which could not boast education and the best theological training. The movement was run under the Joint Council Representing African Churches.

West (1975:144–45) maintains that AICA aimed to serve the Church of Christ in every possible way especially the needs of the AICs. The objective of the association was to realise its aim by concerning itself with the following:

- The theological education of the ministers of the AICs that would include the establishment of theological training and Bible correspondence courses.
- The establishment of a scholarship fund for theological education.
- Addressing the problems and needs of the members of the association.

In support of West's views of the AICA, Oduro (2006:36) states that the AICs mostly attracted people from low-income groups. This might be as a result of the low levels of education of most of their leaders and the lack of educational programmes. Poverty among members has a direct reflection on the income of their leaders and most leaders are so poor that they live from hand to mouth. Finding the money elsewhere has subsequently become difficult. Above all, the use of a feudal system among the AICs has its own limitations and strengths that will be explained below.

- Strengths of the feudal system

We are told that by 1972 the AICA had a membership of over 400 including various Ethiopians and Zionists from every part of South Africa. The largest concentration was in Gauteng which helped to increase the budget by between R7 000 and R8 000 a year (West 1975:145).

Among the AICs such as the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC) of the late Modise, the Saint John's Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) of Manku and some of the developed AIC ministries in the country and the continent is clearer that the functional structure in these churches is based upon a specific spiritual leader whose rank is unquestionable and lasts for life. The bishop and his committee decide on "what" and "how" money collected during church festivals will be utilised. Indeed, for the three largest churches in South Africa mentioned above, among many others, the AICs have erected large structures of worship in their headquarters – all in their own architectural styles. The interesting part is what they do with the money after the building of their church structures. Indeed, the money will end up in someone's pocket, thus resulting in quarrelling and dishonesty (Oduro 2008:164).

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- The weakness of the feudal system

Independent churches were and still are weakened by their feudal ranking in the governing of their churches. A leader occupies a position and his or her administrative role is not to be questioned. Often high positions are held by bishops who themselves are not particularly educated. Ranking was a matter of personal status and support rather than creativity. Most of the AICs are founded by one person who is likely to hold position until death. If there is no succession plan, it is often difficult to hand leadership over to someone else (succession plan is also not always simple, children may fight for positions or ownership). Barrett (1968:218) correctly indicates that leadership within the AICs must emerge with a major innovative idea that is capable of building a church out of the existing feeling of deprivation that intense social-religious stress caused.

The AICs are more interested in spirituality than the economic aspect of their churches. Investing money is not always a priority of the church, except for erecting a church building, which normally takes years. In some cases the bishop and his leadership end up embezzling such money. There are also good intentions relating to ownership and properties. This is clear from the naming of the respective churches and church organisations. For example, holy villages viewed as Jerusalem, houses of prayer, prayer plots called Gethsemane or mercy grounds, holy places for vigils, open-air worship sites, communal ownership of land, agriculture or commercial enterprises, complete financial support for burial societies and mutual help societies, among others (Barrett 1968:273).

Between 1965 and 1970 most Independent Churches joined the AICA, and a theological college called AICA Theological College was established. This College did not last long because of the lack of leadership skills and lack of financial management. In 1970, Bishop Mokoena formed an interim committee which later formed the Reformed Independent Churches Association (RICA). In 1971 Bishop Bengeza broke away from the original AICA and formed the African Independent Church Movement (AICM). In 1972 Bishop Maqhina wanted to become independent of the Christian Institute (CI) and its leadership, including Dr Beyers Naude. In 1975, the AICM split into two parts; Bishop Shongwe led one part and Bishop Bengeza the other. Christ the Rock Indigenous Churches Association (Crica) also dissociated itself from AICA and began to run independently again (Ntsuntsha 1985:15). The essence of these divisions was the thought of leading and managing associations with lots of money, as this was the wish of every bishop in the 1970s.

All the above-mentioned associations were somehow involved in power struggles relating to leadership and greed. Their good intentions did not suggest that they were successful in fulfilling their objectives for the

entire AIC development. Instead, more problems and challenges piled up. Highlight on the breakups will make this even clearer.

Reasons for tensions that led to breakups

There were three major factors that led to the alleged tensions and divisions among the AICs in South Africa. The first one was related to the feudal system of governance among them. This is briefly described in the previous paragraphs dealing with the strengths and weaknesses of the feudal system among the AICs. Disputes occurred in different ways and for different reasons. For example, in the 1980s, the director of the Khanya College for the AICs (Khaic) was suspected of embezzling finances from the donors abroad. He was not the first person to be accused of this; his predecessors had also been unable to survive the criticism, especially some members from AICA which was the founder of Khaic. There was a serious distrust and suspicion of financial embezzlement. There were also physical fights involving the resources purchased by donors' money, including cars and office machines.

There can be disputes within specific hierarchies. Some may be based on genuine grievances, for example the leader embezzling funds, or an official usurping the rightful role of another, or a leader contravening the church's constitution. Other disputes may be contrived. This often happens when a subordinate feels that he should be the leader of the church (either through self-estimation, or through pressure from supporters) and then seeks for some excuses for a confrontation with the church leader.⁶ Sometimes, however, members may just stop from coming to church and start their own. Here the reasons for the split may not be clear apart from the fact that a leader may simply lose members. Secession may result because of the highly decentralised nature of the AICs and their difficulties in communication, distance and lack of education.

Above all, Oduro (2008:1640) refers to the poisoning by the spirit of dependency⁷ which is clearly visible from those who thought that the OAIC is a funding organisation. He is also of the opinion that money matters could easily split the AICs and to this point we could also add dishonesty of the church leaders. Indeed, some members of the AICs could not draw a clear line between the donors and the associations facilitating the donors' funds. To them facilitators were thought to be rich.

⁶ Sometimes it is difficult to understand the real reasons for breakup; it does happen that some divisions may occur as a result of venue and tensions between plot owners or the principal of a school on rentals.

⁷ We talk about the spirit of dependency even though we have referred to self support because of the poverty status of the AICs churches.

The issues that relate to financial aid management

It is a fact that there are few AICs that are financially progressive. And their source of income is their congregations which organised annual fundraising events and the gathered amounts are paid sometimes in instalments or as Sunday contributions which are kept for specific purposes, including salaries, uniforms, books and candles, and other articles used in the church like wine and wafers for communion services (West 1975:25–6). Money was also set aside for emergencies such as funeral expenses for their members. Although small salaries were paid to some officials, they were insufficient and churches consequently do not have sufficient full-time officials. All including the archbishop are in either full- or part-time employment in other religious or non-religious organisations.

Members of AICs are usually paid annual dues at important conferences' services, where much of the money is spent immediately on the cost of the services, which may include feeding all the church members for a couple of days and hiring a hall or classroom. A small amount of money is obtained from the collection, but the most important source is the fundraising services, which are held regularly in combination with other churches. At these services, often held on Saturday nights, churches will alternate in taking the combined proceeds.

Finally, the financial disputes within the AIC churches

The AICs have never spoken about economic development except for poverty and survival strategies. There are only sporadic hints relating to economics and mostly the arguments within these churches are based on issues relating to theological education, spirituality, morality and healing. It is interesting that even the most prolific white AIC writers have never specifically or directly discussed the AIC economic contribution to the country. The idea of the power struggle and cessations among the AICs in this article does not necessarily relate to obvious practices among them, rather we are trying to unpack and find out about the issue of the utilisation of the acquired finances.

Indeed, a major goal of most of the AICs was to save enough money to be able to build church structures. However, the churches were generally only able to make ends meet, and had no cash reserves. The churches draw their membership from the poorer section of the community including their meagre resources as well, and very often any cash surplus will be spent on needy members of the congregation, particularly in cases of sickness and death. The church keeps money in a building society account, which the archbishop, the vice bishop and one ordinary member administer. According to West (1975:26), many AICs have suffered breakaways as a result of financial disputes, and the presence of an ordinary member is designed to

allay any fears the congregation might have about the use of the church money.

Splinters of those with ulterior motives

The term “splinter” is deliberately used to draw a conclusion that will enable the readers to understand the argument. There are various reasons for splinters to occur and they are either healthy or problematic for the AICs. Faith healing among the AICs could be divided into three categories: there is healing during church services, healing by immersion and healing through consultation with a prophet. How will this impact on the financial condition of the AIC groups?

Healing during church services

Among the AICs in almost all of their church services, they pray for the sick and lay hands upon them for healing. This type of healing is often known as an indirect type of healing, as the Holy Spirit is believed to be in control of the situation and will sense those who are not well and will heal them. It also does not require any compensation for services offered except the usual collection. The money collected during the service was recorded in a notebook which the secretary of the church often kept. The money was used to run the church as were other fundraisings in the church. The local bishop would benefit from such fund.

Healing by immersion

Some of the healings are experienced at the riverside where prophets or prophetesses give instructions to the sick on methods of prayer and ritual. During a healing session, immersion plays an important role since the whole body of a sick person is covered by water which spiritually is perceived to provide protection symbolically through the blood of Christ Jesus. It is interesting to note that, after the service, members will gather to celebrate the event and money will be collected, some of which will help to sponsor the families which have hosted the event to some extent. To demonstrate this view, I will refer to short true experiences, in narrative form, of a similar service that I once attended.

Short episode 1

In 1994, I attended an AIC event on baptism in Vaal Triangle. The night before the baptism an all-night prayer session was held and the usual service procedures were followed. A collec-

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tion was taken and recorded in the secretary's financial book. There was a brass band which was part of the church service. I was told the brass band instruments were purchased from the army, police and other music stores.

Brass bands among the AICs are revealed in dreams or through certain members (one St John's member said). When purchased an animal was supposed to be slaughtered to appease the ancestors and God before they can be permanently used in the church. Holy water and ritual spiritual ceremonies will be conducted to secure their future services in the church. The event is known as the dedication of music instruments (*diphala*) and the Levites who will be playing them like in the Old Testament.

For the sake of clarity, there are two types of brass bands; there are those that are used for entertainment and those that are used for church services. The Zionists are not much known for brass bands, but the ZZCs have them and they function like in the apostolic churches. These brass bands are supposed to be dedicated to God and the ancestors (*diphala di a begwa* or the brass band is reported to God and ancestors). During this dedication ceremony of musical instruments, gifts will also be received from some members of the church and from members of other churches. This will be a way to pledge support and next time others could host a similar event and may expect the same support.

Healing through consultation of prophets

This is a common type of healing among the AICs of the Zionists and the apostolic types. It comprises direct healing where the patient comes face to face with the prophet or prophetess. The healer will prophecy and highlight the symptoms of sickness to the patient, but through the Holy Spirit as they say. To be able to predict correctly what the patient suffers from without being told confirms the strength of the spiritual healer's, prophetess' or prophet's power.

Short episode 2

Archbishop Mashitisho of the Ark of Noah Church in Mamelodi, East of Tshwane indicated that the money involved in this type of healing belongs to the healer. It will serve his or her personal needs and has nothing to do with the church needs as such. The consultation fee (also known as *vula mlomo* or open mouth fee) is standardised and used to range from as little as 50c to R100 or more. Today this fee range from R500, especially if the patient is not a member of the church to which

the prophet, prophetess or the healer belongs. There are other components needed such as sacrificing or slaughtering an animal, buying candles, bringing special holy water from specific areas such as caves, waterfalls, dams or the oceans, among other places. All of these involve exorbitant expenses, but are regarded as being necessary to change the challenges and accidents that may impede lives. However, it should be clarified that the prophets and prophetesses have the responsibility of taking care of their respective denominations with love as well.

How does this type of healing impact on the topic of poverty and power struggle among the AICs? The suggested levels of healing above also demonstrate the accessibility of the funds of the church to leaders of the AICs. In many instances leaders use the power of healing to support their members and the community at large and they also benefit financially in the process. Many of the prophets, prophetesses and healers who are able to predict the problems affecting their patients without being told what the problems were by the patients regarded to be the strongest. Apart from the tensions we have indicated above,⁸ the methods of predicting or telling⁹ what affects the life of a person positively or negatively, give honours to the prophet or prophetess. They are able to influence or even bring the whole church into disarray.

One good example of bringing the church into disarray was the Saint Paul Apostolic Faith Mission Church of Archbishop Masango in the East Rand. This church seceded from the Saint John Apostolic Faith Mission of Manku in the 1980s. The same churches are still splitting into further splinter groups today as a result of misunderstandings and conflicts that erupt frequently in them. It is the power struggle by some of the leaders who may want to gun for positions in the church. The Zion Christian Church (ZCC) of Lekganyane was also not immune from such a challenge. Today there are two groups of this church, the star and the dove groups. Observation is that leadership is at the centre of the divisions in their respective denominations.

Can divisions be viewed as a problem or a way of life among the AICs? Can divisions be quelled or not? Can divisions among the AICs benefit their growth as the fastest growing churches in Africa today? One may guess that these questions are too obvious and simple to answer. But, at this stage we can only presuppose and speculate. Indeed it is true that historically

⁸ See section 1.1 on historical tensions caused by a state of poverty among AICs in South Africa.

⁹ Indeed this method does not differ much from the inyangas' and sangomas' perspectives, because they all predict outcomes, although AICs focus is on biblical context. However, there are those prophets and prophetesses who combine their biblical gifts of prophecies with the traditional healing experiences.

money is always a factor in life, and it too has brought many conflicts among the AICs. What needs to be looked into at this stage is a way forward in search of a solution. Since we have already shown what is happening to these churches concerning finances, the next concern will be to look into the possible provisional solutions? The next section will look into that.

I have tried to understand the meaningful economic strategy of the AICs that different scholars discussed, but could not get sufficient information about it. Most of the literature does not reflect amicable economic participation. However, there are significant indications as in Daneel's writings. I studied his two books, the *African Christian Outreach vol. 1* and the *African Earthkeepers Vol. 2*, which were both published by Unisa Press in 1999 and 2001 respectively. In part three of the *African Christian Outreach vol. 1*, there is a presentation by Solom Zvakanaka, the bishop of the Zion Apostolic Church (2001), which is of significance for this article. Zvakanaka (2001:221) sees the wealth of an AIC member on rain, seed and thanksgiving. According to him this is the economic language of the AICs, but is often obscured by the fact that the country's main economy dominates their ideas of economic vision.

The essence, to understand rain, seed and thanksgiving relates to socioeconomic well-being as a dimension of salvation (Zvakanaka 2001:231). Salvation can be realised in people's lives, social relationships, economic endeavours and spiritual lives. The AICs' success is twofold; firstly, those who are in urban areas will emphasise currency as being the most important. But for those in the rural areas, while currency is important, agricultural subsistence is important too.¹⁰ The increase of the cattle, goats and sheep and any form of progress that enhances well-being indicates God's blessing.

In Daneel's other book, entitled *African Earthkeepers Vol. 2*, there are discussions on pages 31, 106 and 202 to 203 about the church as the deliverer from poverty and agent of socioeconomic progress, God of the crops and healing the soil and human beings. Daneel (1999:3-32) states:

With their ecclesiastic isolation broken and their leaderships progress through some basic theological patently manifest, the AICs felt themselves increasingly empowered and encouraged to deal with educational and economic development issues. For the first time they were able to capitalise on a united ecumenical front in development planning, fundraising and project implementation (Daneel 1999:3-32).

¹⁰ Ibid.

Here we are attempting to highlight the economic and developmental consciousness of AIC members. This also shows the level of interest in wealth. That is why tension is prevalent among the leadership of these churches as their followers may see them as the potential havens for survival.

AICs on ecumenical modes

It should be clarified that AICs, while are being regarded as too slow to develop ecumenically, they are developing significantly. Recently the Organisation of African Independent Churches (OAIC), which is now a mother body to the AICs across the African continent, providing leadership and guidance to the development of the AICs, came up with the concept of a founding vision and through it most of the South African AICs leaders are part of the OAIC. The founding vision was first articulated at an OAIC workshop in Johannesburg in 1996. The term “founding vision” refers to the original AIC founders’ understanding of the world and of the gospel that they had embraced, which moved them to act as African Christians in their world.¹¹ The concept founding vision was also viewed as the “vision for a better world” (Lubaale 2009). It has become increasingly important as a tool for the development of the OAIC vision and programmes. It has further been used to assist AIC members working with HIV/AIDS and development to identify the sources of the values which motivate them in their sacrificial service to the community.

The founding vision helped the AICs to have a central point of development ecumenically and to interact with other ecumenical bodies such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) and its regional wings like the South Africa Council of Churches (SACC). Interest in participating in the world economy is growing. Eventually it is believed that the AICs will have a significant impact on the growing economy of the world.

Conclusion

The issue of power struggles and money among the AICs is an unsettling one because it is one of the factors which are constantly infringing a good running of the AICs. The feudal system itself as practised in these churches has revealed positive and negative projections. One leader may not be able to determine the future of the organisation when he or she has passed away. There will be no one to take over and guide the church or maintain the vision of the church founders.

¹¹ The early history of the OAIC has been charted in *Rise Up and Walk: Conciliarism and the African Indigenous Churches, 1915 – 1987*, David B Barrett & T John Padwick (eds.), Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Poor as the AICs may seem, there is a lot of money exchanged in the church for various reasons. This places these churches in a good position to have a sound economic muscle. However, this improvement will only become clear if skills in financial management are acquired. Money is involved in most of the AIC activities, but it is not always managed properly. The reasons for this is not that the AICs are not educated as many believe, but that members avoid engaging their leaders directly in discussing sensitive issues, including the finances of the church.

I believe that in future when the AICs begin to open up and take an interest in matters of economic development in their churches a different picture on the economic significance will show. In conclusion I looked at the recent development of the AICs from the ecumenical perspective which will widen their scope and help them to acquire new ideas towards developing their dreams. The idea of founding vision is important for them to focus on growth differently. I have also tried to prove that working with the OAIC is not a different thing but a development from within since OAIC is the child brain of AICS in Africa.

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