

THE AIC'S AS INTERLOCUTORS FOR BLACK THEOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

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SUMMARY

In this dissertation I shall give a brief historical survey of Black Theology and the African Independent Churches (AICs). The study focuses mainly to the developments of the two trends in South Africa. This was done after realising that Black Theologians often ignored the history of Black people, including that of the AICs which has in the end stymied their efforts. The immediate effects were negative in that little results were produced. AICs and Black Theology have interesting histories which complement each another. I will present the current state of affairs and give some guidelines on how the future debate can be carried out. The two theological trends have weaknesses and strengths which are clearly identifiable. In chapter four I give guidelines for future debates and possible new developments. This study is also carried out to expand the scope of dialogue and constructive debate among the two.

<u>Key Words:</u>		
Black Theology	African Theology	Complementarity
Spirituality	African Independent Churches	Interlocutor
Preferential	Community	Reconstruction
Healing		

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ABBREVIATIONS

AICs	African Independent Churches
AICA	African Independent Church Association
AME	African Methodist Episcopal
AMEC	African Methodist Episcopal Church
ANC	African National Congress
AZAPO	Azanian Peoples Organisation
AZASA	Assembly of the Zion and Apostolic Association
ASCA	African Spiritual Churches Association
ASATI	Association of South African Theological Institutes
ATR	African Traditional Religions
CAHSCZ	Catholic Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion
CAIC	Council of African Independent Churches
FEC	First Ethiopian Church
ICT	Institute of Contextual Theology
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDAMASA	Interdenominational African Ministers Association of South Africa.
IDAMF	Interdenominational African Ministers Federation
IDWAMWASA	Interdenominational African Ministers Wives Association
KAI	Khanya Institute for African Independent churches
NAIL	New Africa Investments Ltd.
NGKA	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Africa
NGO	Non Governmental Organisations
OAIC	Organisation of African Independent Churches
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RICA	Reformed Independent Churches Association
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SATCIC	South African Theological College of Independent Churches
SCM	Students Christian Movement
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
TEEC	Theological Education by Extension College
TIAMA	Transvaal Interdenominational African Ministers Association
WCC	World Council of Churches
ZCC	Zion Christian Church
ZIRRCON	Zimbabwe Institute of Religious Research and Ecological Conservation

CHAPTER 1

1 INTRODUCTION

It may be fair to argue that Black Theology has for a long time ignored the African Independent Churches (AICs) in its dealing with the grassroots working class communities. A Black Theology main point of attraction was the political scenario derived from the mainlined tradition as their only possible means of theologising. The AICs became aware of this as well, hence their response shows that it is not Black Theology alone but rather all, progressive mainline churches in South Africa who have sidelined them. Thus, the writing of "Speaking for ourselves", a booklet published in 1985 by the Institute of Contextual Theology (ICT), is the work of AIC ministers and bishops who raise their concern about the problems of being misrepresented by various Churches and Black Theologians as well. This dissertation attempts to be affirmative of the AICs and at the same time to dialogue with Black Theology from the perspective of the AIC's.

1.1 THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem under the spotlight is emanating from the fact that Black Theologians are beginning to be haunted by a short memory span which is often a threat towards the eradication of future Black Theology. Maluleke (1996:20) for example has often shown sympathy towards Black Theology¹. The reason for this emanates from where most of the popular South African Black Theologians 'are', who have shifted their attention towards African Theology. According to Black Theology, African Theology and Contextual Theology among others the popularity of Black Theology activity prior to 1994 was just mere political mopping up of the last kicks of apartheid. Most of the recent articles written by popular Black Theologians in South Africa are showing signs of despondency. They are also beginning to show respect and interest for the AIC groups.

¹Maluleke (1996:20) wrote that theologies including Black Theology, African Theology, Contextual theologies, Kairos Document (1985), and the latest emerging Theology of Reconstruction have all appealed to a public grounding in one way or another. This information is challenging Motlhabi's (1994:120) view of seeing Black Theology and African Theology as partners in which Black Theology is the lesser of the two. According to Maluleke Black Theology can stand on its own and should be like that always.

Support of my observation here comes from De Gruchy (1990:64) that Black Theology in South Africa had its origins in the early African rejection of European theological, ecclesiastical and cultural hegemony, typified by the emergence of the African Indigenous Churches and African theologies. Black Theology in South Africa has developed in a variety of ways since its early days, but it remains essentially a theology of Black liberation from both White and Western culture (Hopkins 1989:93). That is the reason why African Theology in the South African context has largely been subsumed under Black Theology. It has provided a spark in attaching meaning to African Theology by being actively involved in critical issues affecting the lives and the integrity of Black people.

According to Ngcokovane (1989:19), Black Theology both in its origin and development, has been held captive by a theology which is Euro-American, and has also had its cultural values arrested. In this way Black Theology has never given room to the democratization of the Church structure (as an institution and a theological enterprise). Thus, democratization can only be done by the masses themselves. This is referring to the people's orientated theology or "a people's theology". The starting point for such a theology is a sober view and clinical criticism of the present theological captivity in which Black Theologians find themselves.

Ngcokovane (1989:35) expressed his anxiety by stating that "for almost two decades, Black Theology has sought definition of itself and has not successfully outgrown such a state. Hence a Black Theology Conference held in Wilgerspruit, South Africa on 16 - 19 August 1983, felt the need and urgency to move out of such an impasse. The consensus reached, which combined contemporary viewpoints, is that Black Theologians should now address themselves, inter alia, to the content of Black Theology and its methodology".

There are various ways of resolving the crisis of Black Theology, according to Govender (1984:9). The following are included among others: the need for a comprehensive historical survey of developments in Black Theology; the need to confront and put an end to the "elitist character" of Black Theology; the need to develop black spirituality, including a need for more specificity in contextualisation; the advancing of a unified political description of the struggle for liberation; and the impact of, and the need to come to grips with, "the dynamism and the survival

mechanism of the South African state...”. Some of these characteristics will be deliberated upon during the discussions in some sections of this dissertation.

The issue of Black Feminist Theology needs equal attention. Mosala (1985:109) has radically criticised Black Theology that, with the exception of a few recent formulations, Black Theology has never really made an ideological break with bourgeois theological and biblical hermeneutics, and has not become a liberation theology. Many Black Theologians (Moore 1994) have expressed desperation and even disillusionment with the state of Black Theology.

It is Mosala (1989:13) who gives reasons why he thinks Black Theology in both North America and South Africa has so far failed to become a viable theoretical weapon of the struggle in the hands of the exploited masses themselves. Mosala could have been speaking of Black and African theologies as well as of various manifestations of African Christianity across the continent. His diagnosis is that by equating the Bible with the word of God, Black theologians mistakenly made Black women” (Mosala 1989:19). According to Mosala, to equate the Bible with the Word of God implies the inescapable tendency to ideologize the Bible.

The current Black Theology according to Tlhagale (in Moore1994) is said to be generated by the job descriptions of the academic institutions which require Black theologians to teach Black Theology. One Black theologian accuses others of having betrayed the revolution by withdrawing from direct involvement in the struggle on the street and thus marginalising themselves (Pityana in Moore 1994). Black Theology was also charged as a religious desk of AZAPO or a theological group in yesterday's politics, having slept through the revolution which swept through the country (Tlhagale in Moore1994). According to Villa-Vicencio (in Moore 1994), Black Theology is still trapped in that period of resistance and refuses to engage with reconstruction. Tlhagale accuses Black Theology of being fascinated by racism, understood simply as White power.

Tlthagale (in Moore 1994) thus goes ahead charging that there are other dimensions of the Black experiences which have to be addressed including violence, the rejection of schools, the destruction of clinics, the collapse of family life, homelands, the struggle between various political parties, the ideology of non racialism, the abuse of women and children, our need for a sense of hope. These are things that touch Black lives daily, but Black Theology is not facing them. Nor is it facing the extent of the collapse of a moral order in the Black community as young people burn other people alive. These views however, should not be seen as attacks on Black Theology other than saying they are the outcomes of some of the internal introspection among the exponents of Black Theology.

Thomas (1996:2) on the other hand discovered that the AIC reflects the effects of apartheid life and the realisation that most of the Black people have minimal education, limited skills, and earn little money. The majority of these churches are syncretistic in that they derive their theological basis from African Traditional Religion and Protestant or Catholic Christianity. To them religion is part of all the aspects of life, and as a result there is no religious secular dichotomy (Thomas 1996:4). God is, according to them, associated with healing. This thinking implies that God as the healer is concerned with the difficulties of the world, as well as the suffering of the individual people.

The history and effects of Apartheid have restrained the Black population, the poor in particular. The transformative nature of healing rituals can either impact on apartheid by encouraging it to replicate itself or to transform the social relations which accommodate other people with dignity. A tension exists between replication and transformation (Comaroff 1985:6). The AICs as social entities, move back and forth between acceptance rejection of the hegemonic apartheid system and its legacy of abusive racial discrimination and resistance to that system.

Transformation and replication are not static categories (Thomas 1996:8), but are in fact active historical processes. Thus, the healing rituals in the sacred healing space among the AICs represent the processes of negotiation and renegotiation. The poor and illiterate use the sacred space available to them to reshape secular history. Poor black people create a new order of social relations that permits them to cope with a fragmented and hostile world. The establishment of an

institution that was independent of colonial control was an act of resistance. AICs created a new cosmology in a separate sacred space, to practice religion in their own terms. They have sought to create their own free space through disengagement from the Apartheid structures. This is a creative progressive indication of the people's choice in the direction of a non conflicting world. In a metaphoric sense both Black Theology and AIC Theology are struggling for survival in a meaningful way. If Black Theology became insolvent, the AICs as reliant on and beneficiaries of Black Theology will lose some of their significant shares in the process. Black Theology could reinforce the AIC struggle to establish a theology which is genuinely an African, Black, effort. This does not suggest that Black Theology should be forced to be AIC or vice versa, but that they could cultivate a culture of mutual understanding to legitimise their respective existences.

1.2 THE RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The study of the AICs and Black Theology as interlocutors is relevant in more than one way. It will impact upon these two theological trends in addressing the social, political and economic problems affecting the majority of poor Blacks in South Africa. On the other hand Black Theology will begin to take the issues of the theology of the Spirit, which are the essences of the AIC theology seriously. This is a "catch up" approach towards the theology of context, where God in his power is responsible for the provision of a gospel which addresses the actual needs of the marginalised, and this will be the people's religious choice, not an imposition from elsewhere.

Black Theology should again see itself as an integral part of the 'African rooted theology'² which does not isolate itself from the other African theological forms. It should be part of the building material for that theology which is originally African. To seek the relationship between Black Theology and the AIC one may not bypass the syncretistic nature of the AIC theology. They (AICs) combine African cultural values and Christian values though they are also interpreted in other cultural values.

²"African rooted Theology" is referring to African Theology itself. While it has been regarded as an old theology by many of its exponents, it has been functioning in a dormant way. The interest seems to have gained momentum recently. It would be mischievous to think of a single theology for Africa: this is already hinted on at the previous pages of this dissertation and will be taken further in the next.

A careful worked out study will help to reconcile Black Theology and the AIC programmes which seem rather complementary in many spheres. The AICs have welcomed Christianity but extracted certain forms of it which are useful in strengthening their own religious heritage and convictions. Black Theology will be helped to change its focus from a theology of demonstration towards a theology of reconstruction, and the AICs will also benefit from this latter focus. This study will also not aim to create an isolated stagnant Christianity, rather a theology which is part of the world Christian Ecumenical Movement.

The other basis for this study emanates from uncertainty as based on Tutu's question (Villa-Vicencio 1985 :160), whether Black Theology is a theology at all? Some accusations are that Black Theology is not just the product of the new historical consciousness, but also subversive of the new historical consciousness. However, Maluleke (1996:14) opposes this continuity as not the only way of relating to the "new historical consciousness." These assumedly uninterrupted, positive, un-problematic and harmonious relations between Black Theology and the modern spirit (1996:14) have caused some Black theologies: at least that of Maimela to fail to connect meaningfully with the struggle of the poor.

Maimela's final solution, which amounts to a rejection of Biblical hermeneutics as an arena of the truth, is rather abrupt and unconvincing according to Maluleke. Without regard for the Bible to continue as a haven of the "Black Masses" (Mofokeng 1988:40) it simply substitutes "pragmatic or moral arguments" from the Bible. Maluleke argued that if the Bible is the haven of the masses, pragmatic or moral arguments cannot be constructive in such a way that they will be able to address the masses without the use of the Bible, which is their choice. The point which Maluleke is suggesting, and I support, is that the poor communities cannot be divorced from the use of the Bible as in the AICs and other basic communities in South Africa.

Mofokeng describes Western Christianity as the conqueror of African Traditional Religion. His view of the AICs is that they are churches of compromise, in which elements of the Christian tradition represented by the Bible and those of traditional religion conveyed by African oral tradition are synthesised (1988:34-42). This in itself is imperative as the entry point into new debates by all African Religions and Christianity itself. This is so because seeing Christianity wiped

out of the African continent is unimaginable. Black Theology as the new historical consciousness should be grounded upon the ideas of the African Independent Churches, which in turn do not estrange themselves from African Traditional Religions. This will give Black Theology a historical expression and justification which it has long deserved.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODS AND SOURCES

The pattern of the methodological approach that was followed in this essay was the contextual field work research among the grassroots communities in South Africa, oral interviews among the AICs bishops, prophets, prophetesses and ministers of various AICs church communities. Most of the research was done in Gauteng Region. In the place of interviews dialogue method was recommended and the outcomes were translated into transcripts for reference purposes. The other useful method was the active participation to which the AIC church services and their important meetings were attended. The exponents of Black Theology were consulted to give their own opinions on the topic of this dissertation. Some of the important Black Theology meetings and conferences were attended. The purpose of these methodologies is an attempt to bridge theory and the context so that not only the academics could understand but also the ordinary interested people.

It was not deemed necessary to conduct specific research into sectarian and separatist churches, especially the Ethiopian churches. Many of these churches broke away from mission churches and the writers would be the missionaries who had actually experienced the secessionists. The leading secessionists would also be known to the missionaries. In fact, Mzimba (1927:90) indicates that the secessionist movement was not thought to have a chance to last the White missionary establishment. A focussed study of these churches was therefore, out of the question. If this was the attitude towards the Ethiopian churches, what more of the numerous, unknown churches? It is against this background that the ignorant, yet harsh comment of the Missionary Council, which will be referred to, on the Bullhoek massacre must be understood.

Most of the synthesised sources will be taken from libraries and other literature reviews, news papers, interviews, historical information, oral tradition and field work research. In terms of Black Theology, *The Journal of Black Theology in South Africa* plays a vital role in the track recording

of the Black theologians such as Moore, Motlhabi, Maluleke, Maimela, the work of Bediako, Tlhagale, Ngcokovane, Thomas, Mofokeng and Jafta among others will be looked into. Also, important information will be extracted from the resources of *African Traditional Religion* and *African Theology*.

The other major input will be derived from the White AIC writers including their research work and some of their recent publications on contemporary Black views. They are, among others, Sundkler, Oosthuizen, Anderson, Naude' and Philpott [though not dealing with the AIC's specifically]. There is much in common between these scholars in terms of methodology. Sundkler is the archetype of the White AIC researchers.

1.3.1 TERMINOLOGY AND CONCEPTS

1.3.1.1 Interlocutor

Interlocutors are those involved in a dialogue or participating in conversation, also to argue constructively about something in order to arrive at an agreement or not. This term in our case will be used in attempting to bridge the gap between the AICs and Black Theology (which was dominated by intellectual discourse). The discussions will be focussed on similarities and differences between Black Theology and AICs.

The burning question is whether the AICs could become serious interlocutors for Black Theology? In the 1980's Mosala was challenged by Karl Marx's view of religion as the opium of the people. He even thought of embarking on a major study of the AICs which he did through the help of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). Mayatula's (1972:175) 'miracle' of the young Black intelligentsia who had their eyes fixed on these churches did not produce much direct reflection on the AICs.

In the late eighties Takatso Mofokeng made reference to popular religion among the oppressed Black people but he avoided the AICs. It seemed as if he settled for the Black working class as the category of interlocutor in his theologising. While this is true, he could have clearly distinguished between the "poor working class" and the "unemployed masses" who form the significant part of the AICs. In other words it suggests that working class groups are never stable.

Some come while others go for various reasons, and what about those who are retrench for argument sake.

It has often been said that Black Theologians had critical attitudes towards the AICs for their lack of overt political activity. This form of consistent unambiguity in Black Theology is difficult to sustain. Daneel (1984:65) testifies to the disdain of Black Theologians for the AICs is very tenuous, in fact, anecdotal. If Black Theology, and by implication Black Consciousness, criticized AICs it was in the context of its critique of all “non Whites”, whether on the shop floor, in Bantustans or AICs. Similarly, it can be argued that in so far as Black Theology addressed issues around the spiritual and socio-political state of Black people in general, AICs, as one of the sub-texts, were not and could not be excluded. More significantly, to be more critical of the AIC, praxis should not be tantamount of their dismissal.

The fact that Whites have shown much interest in the AICs, but not Black Theology, might itself have acted as a deterrent for Black Theologians. To a certain extent it must be admitted that for Black Theologians and Black intellectuals, AICs have not been seriously regarded as a (cf Sundkler 1948:13) ‘problem area’ over a long period of time. That gave the White scholars and missionary establishments the upper-hand in the field. White research into AICs has been used as a tool to proof how their resultant theologies are closer to the Black community, and therefore better than the Western type ‘academic Black Theology’ which distanced itself from the AICs.

1.3.1.2 Black Theology

The term “Black” could be misinterpreted as promoting a racial agenda. However, the term was initially intended to stimulate awareness among Blacks of their own oppression and to gain a sense of power. “Black” as a philosophical concept, denote a number of things: a state of oppression referring to indigenous Africans by the colonial laws including apartheid in the past in South Africa. It also calls for African black identity alongside the whites as the superior race.

The other meaning of the use of the “black” is the power of the African people. Power to liberate themselves and improved their living standard. The ethical understanding of the word “theology” on the other hand simply means the study of God by men and women for each other. Black

Theology will therefore be interpreted as the study of God from the perspective of the experiences of Black people. This suggests the use of Black Theology as a brand to express the structural variety especially in line with western cultural challenges.

Black Theology is defined (Villa-Vicencio 1985:126) as a direct aggressive response to a situation where Blacks experience alienation at political, economic and cultural levels. The symbolic value of the word "Black" is that it captured the broken existence of Black people, it also summoned them collectively to burst the chains of oppression and engage themselves creatively in the construction of the new society. "Black" in Black Theology underlines the unique experience of the underdog. It is suspicious of a Christian tradition that accepts uncritically the economic, and political institutions of the day. Black Theology nowadays is under strong attack including attack, from its propagators.

One example is Motlhabi (1994:113) who seeks to review the extent to which Black Theology has heeded the call for a re-appropriation of African culture, as well as the manner in which this challenge has been handled by Black Theologians. Motlhabi as a result, is in favour of Black Theology being subsumed under African Theology. This is interesting for as long as Black Theologians are aware of the consequences of competition between Black Theology and African Theology. It is only when both theological streams cooperate with one another that progress can be made. Maluleke (1995:1-30) strongly encourages the future openness of Black Theology. He is of the opinion that the crisis of Black Theology is the crisis of all Black life. As a result, for him Black Theology will always be in crisis because the crisis is perpetual and continuous among the Black grass root people.

Maluleke (1996:27) express his concern about the fact that Mofokeng theology is informed by popular religion and yet he (Mofokeng) ignores the AICs. He questioned Mofokeng's basis in doing this, which he finds unacceptable. The implied criticism of the AIC's by Black Theology or Black Consciousness, relates to the criticism, judgement of black people at large. Black Theology can be very vital to assist AICs, particularly to create sound platforms at the universities, and helping to improve their seminaries, amongst others.

1.3.1.3 AICs

African Independent or Initiated Churches (AICs) are commonly known as the separatist or independent churches, as Sundkler called them. The AICs are breakaways resulting from the mission churches. This explains why the AICs are as old as the mission churches in South Africa. They are church groups related to colonial resistance. Generally AICs were seen to be apolitical by not resisting the apartheid system. This is however, questionable if it is taken into account that they form part of the poor, marginalised groups in South Africa. They also are known to have been divided into the Ethiopian type and the Zionist movement as well as the Apostolic. I am not going to delve much in their technical varieties and concentrating in their inclusiveness.

In the process of the discussion in this essay, the understanding of the AIC will in some instances gain the upper hand over against Black Theology, which is known for its radical political stand. This is not to say that the voices and the views of the Black theologians will not be appreciated, but they will be introduced only for the purposes of a dialogue between them and the AICs. On the other hand it should be clear that the AICs are existing church groups which have never sought any sympathy for their existence.

Indeed the early missionary bodies were interested in studying the AICs. The newspapers have been thus far interested in studying the AICs as in the Native Churches Commission of 1925³. In fact, by and large, interest in AICs studies has been very much a White male affair. This has given rise to the need for collecting more information that dates beyond the researched written data collected by White AIC theologians. This study will seek to identify the feelings of the actual member groups of the AIC. In a careful way, alongside the existing written sources about them, the way in which they view themselves will be looked into, as well as the world surrounding them.

According to Mosala (1985:110) colonialism has dispossessed black people from their political and economic heritage, and it is true that the situation declared Blacks to be neither Africans nor capitalists. If that is the case, will Africans succumb to maintaining the colonial status quo, or even use some of its techniques to survive? Will this not create another form of inculturated

³The Native Commission of 1925 was mainly interested in taking the statistics and monitoring the growth of the separatist churches. More information will unfold during the discussions in this dissertation.

colonial practice? Since the African Black theologians were not part of the AICs missionary discourse, how will they replace the AIC theology or Christian world view with their own theology? This will call for the unbiased debate with the AIC's without contaminating the originality of their Christian understanding.

Their ways of resolving the socioeconomic obstacles in their daily lives, will be addressed through their understanding of reality which encompasses among other factors, prayer, healing, ancestral veneration and wish for prosperity. How can Black Theology contribute to the AICs and vice-versa? The contribution by Black Theology could be in assisting the AICs to discover the lacunae in their theology. AICs will on the other hand provide an audience for Black Theology without necessarily being assimilated into it.

1.4 PERSONAL STANCE

Biographical reasons for my interest in Black Theology could be traced wayback since 1976 through direct involvement in the struggle for the liberation of Black people in the townships of Gauteng. Although I was not part of the Wilgerspruit Black theological conference in 1983, I was part of the comrades who supported it strongly at the time. I have attended several meetings where South African Black theologians have presented papers. That is where I have gained an interest in Black Theology itself. In 1998 I was privileged to meet James Cone personally at the University of Columbia in New York. He strongly felt that Black Theology would remain relevant for as long as there is a "human race" classified as African American or South African Blacks.

On the other hand AICs also became a field of interest for me from 1986 when I was directly involved with them as a researcher, occupying a post held by Rev John Lamola who stepped down for personal reasons. I have done exclusive field research by interviewing various African traditional healers including AICs, have also attended their church services, and conferences both in South Africa and outside the country. The more I researched the AICs, the more I began to understand that they are an important force to be reckoned with, in terms of Black self identity and self understanding, let alone that African traditional religion was one of my major subjects when doing my first degree at Unisa. I therefore think that I am well placed to carry on with the discussion of this nature.

While Black Theology is seeing itself as “the haven of the masses”, it should not lose sight of all aspects of African critical issues affecting the grassroots people daily. It should also be understood that the democratic change in 1994 in South Africa also meant a change of processes and approaches. This involves mental, physical and religious thinking patterns of the past into the present. At the same time answers could not come from Black Theology alone, but also from other structures, in this case, from the grassroots themselves.

Black Theology should connect with many aspects of a Black person’s life. Another important example is the use of the word “Black” in South African business premises. Black Economic Empowerment for example, is associated with big Black consortiums⁴. They among others include NAIL led by Dr Nthato Motlana who has resigned; Advocate Moseneke has taken over from him. The Black Lawyers Association, Land Reform Groups and various Black NGOs are all related to the upliftment of the social life of Black people who were previously disadvantaged by the system of apartheid.

Black Churches should not merely rest content with talking theory and lacking active involvement in the real issues of the communities they are representing. It is true that Black scholars who have been trained in Europe or United States would level to apply western tools in viewing not only the AICs, but life as a whole. When Black theologians view Black Theology as no longer relevant this means the wearing out of their ideas and a failure to identify responsibilities in their own Black society. Perhaps it was good that most of the AICs from their background focussed much on the forms of a theology they could account for and also understand better. A theology which was their own creation and not an imposition.

Black Theology should be regarded as a distinct theological model alongside other models of African Theology. Black Theology should be traceable to the origins of a black person, it means that this theology must transcend the political struggle with a focus also on the spiritual well-being of the people as well. The formation of the Interdenominational African Ministers' Associations

⁴This information is important to highlight the fact that Black people are in a process of reorganising themselves not only theologically but also in other social faculties. The black people’s lives should be seen as comprehensively as a whole. This will make sense for various developments anticipated by the black people, including theological ones.

(IDAMASA) has played a vital role in this initiative. This association was founded in 1915 at the time when the African National Congress was beginning to pick up momentum (Khoapa 1972:30). The African Independent Churches, with their long history stretching as far back as eighteen hundred, affiliated to IDAMASA in 1960.

It is interesting to note that the AICs have earlier developed several useful Associations among them. These elementary Associations became important forces of theology and practice for the AIC's. The main ones (1972:32) were the African Independent Churches Association (AICA); Reformed Independent Churches Association (RICA) and Assembly of the Zionic and the Apostolic Association (AZASA).

Black Theology was in fact part of the early IDAMASA initiative, which interestingly does not originate around the 1976 Soweto uprisings as it is commonly viewed. The president of IDAMASA (Khoapa 1972:32) from 1965 Rev. F de Waal Mahlasela in his opening speech to the conference, emphasised the need for African to dedicate themselves to the crystallisation and propagation of Black Theology. The AICs joined IDAMASA which had 117 branches and membership of more than 1000. The Black Consciousness has already started in way back in 1915 by the same organisation then known as Transvaal Interdenominational African Ministers Association (TIAMA). It could be argued that Black Theology became formalised only in 1976 although this assumption needed to be qualified.

The AICs and Black Theology clearly rubbed shoulders in IDAMASA and the same understanding needs to be retrieved once more. The AICs were paralysed by the spontaneous splits not only from the so called mainline churches but also among themselves. It is clear that a reconciliatory campaign to revive that early initiative could warrant the legitimacy of the AICs in these days. This could be done through dialogue among the defendants of these Associations. On the other hand most of the historical AIC associations have declined tremendously because of the lack of funds and inactivity in the public political debates.

1.5 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

developments in Black Theology and AICs as it stands at the moment. In chapter 4, I explore the possible debate between the two. This will be done by making use of four central concepts: 1. The preferential option for the poor; 2. Priority / primacy of Black experience; 3. Spirituality; 4. and Complementarity.

CHAPTER 2

OVERVIEW OF THE DEBATE BETWEEN THE AICs AND BLACK THEOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The gap between AICs and Black Theology was created by the historical distortions and suspicions between the two. In the first instance the AICs were paralysed by the misunderstanding and the failure to map out the reasons for early secessions from the missionary churches. The impact of the secessionists is supposed to have given birth to what could be called an African Church in the traditional sense. It is true that the AICs portrayed such a model, but are still searching for recognition and seeking support to achieve their meaningfulness. They need the academic and qualified representatives "from within" to give credence to their ecclesiastical beliefs. It means that the theology of the AICs needs to display openness⁵ and also participate in the international Christianity as well.

Secondly weaknesses of Black Theology were indicated from the large number of people interviewed by Basil Moore (Pityana in De Gruchy 1994: 90-91) so as to discover where Black Theology had gone since the publication and banning of Essays in Black Theology⁶ in 1972. It was discovered that Black Theology has become disconnected from the struggles of the people today, particularly the grassroots. Also that the leading Black Theologians are no longer pastors, parish ministers or even seminary lecturers and therefore have not been able to impact on the life of the Church at the ecclesiastical level. Black Theology no longer captures the imagination of the oppressed because the political strategies have multiplied and opportunities have extended. Lastly, for the past 25 years Black Theology did not show any advancement in its arguments which has resulted in a lost of attention from the believers.

⁵ AIC theology has been kept dormant; and the practitioners of that theology never came out to present it fully. One reason could be that they feel inferior to openly come out with such a theology, with the fear that it may be unacceptable to the Mainline churches, who are constantly a threat, since the latter regard the former as inferior.

⁶"Essays in Black Theology" was edited by Mokgethi Motlhabi and published by the Black Theology Project of the University Christian movement. It was finally banned on 28 July 1972.

Black Theology distorted history by confining its origins to the wake of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 70's. Although there was a strong common interest in fighting apartheid, political organisations such as AZAPO have put more of an emphasis on Black consciousness⁷ which convincingly was the bedrock and the origin of Black Theology although there is a strong claim that Black Theology in South Africa was strongly influenced by the United States.

This bondage of Black Theology to a political organisation of the calibre of AZAPO has paralysed the legitimacy of the original meaning of Black Theology, which by no means was supposed to be 'non negotiable'. Black Theology was supposed to be a movement which represents all Blacks in South Africa including those coming from other political affiliations. This was going to create a space wherein AICs would see themselves as the source of spiritual inspiration for Black Theology, which seemed to be lacking. The following subsections will deliberate more on the history of how the AICs and Black Theology have related to one another.

2.2 HISTORY OF THE DEBATE BETWEEN THE AICs AND BLACK THEOLOGY

It was convincingly argued (Pato in De Gruchy 1994:155) that the AICs emerged from the socio-cultural and political conflicts posed by the dominance of the colonial powers and European Christendom. Black people had assumed subordinate positions not only in society but also in the church. They had been uprooted and were no longer secure in their own land and culture. This situation precipitated the need for black people to take control of shaping their lives, their destiny and their faith.

The AICs, as part of the grassroots community and religious working class, form an important ally of the struggle as the core of the religious the working class. AICs according to Mosala (in Villa Vicencio 1985:110) are religious-cultural organisations of the descendants of former African pastoralists. It is interesting to see Mosala unhesitatingly seeking to include African Independent Churches meaningfully in the struggle, unlike his former stand that Marxism was the only basis for Black Theology.

⁷Even though Black Consciousness was part of every Black person's life, it was closely linked to the rise of Steve Bantu Biko's movement in the early 70's.

It could be argued that not only Mosala but also other proponents of Black Theology seemed to have come to a cross road. They were confronted by an unconditional decision making task, whether Black Theology should be on its own or join forces with African Theology or the AICs or even both. It seems that the pendulum is swinging in the direction of African Theology, as more relevant to absorb Black Theology itself, while on the other hand researchers and scholars such as Maluleke (1996:43) is of the opinion that Black Theology will never lose meaning as long as Black Africans are intimately linked to their original traditional roots.

Black Theology could and should exist on its own as another force to remind Blacks who they are and what their role is in the multicultural society of South Africa. This theology can be utilised by the AICs as well. Since Black Theology is an open church like the members of the AICs it can be useful in recharging the existing Black churches and other interested organisations eager to improve the life standard of black people.

African Independent Churches likewise deserve to be given a chance by constructively engaging them in open inclusive debate and dialogue. In such debated they should be offered an opportunity to speak from the perspective of tradition and culture. They will have to be given a chance to discover ways and means in which they can utilise some concepts of Black Theology in their theological practices. The action must be spontaneous without being forced upon them. It is vital at this stage to give a short history of the AICs which believe is imperative in creating a profile of these churches and why it is significant to encourage the debate with Black Theology. African Independent Churches (Turner 1962:132) could be traced as far back as 1884 when Nehemiah Tile seceded from the Wesleyan Church and formed the Tembu National Church⁸.

⁸The AICs could be traced as far back as the coming of the early missionaries in South Africa. Already conflict was a reality among the tribal communities. The Dutch settlers had arrived in the Cape in 1652 during the Mfecane (the crushing) or Difeqane (forced migration) era (Callinicos 1980:5-6). Both the Boer and the English (:6) wars have left negative thoughts in many Black peoples minds. The loss of grazing land and animals created an indelible historical nightmare for many Blacks. Competitions between missionaries came in while the minds of Black communities in South African were already disturbed through tribal and colonial factious forces which often threatened lives, wealth and peace. As a result resistance was grounded on the already confrontational environment and religious groups were not an exception.

Saayman (1991:54) traces the origin of the AICs further back to the discovery of Ntsikana (1780-1821) as the foremost Black minister in South Africa⁹ followed by Tiyo Soga¹⁰ (1829-1871). In that period confrontations were inevitable between the missionaries and some of their converts due to cultural and traditional disputes. In 1872 the Black members of “Herman’s” congregation of the Paris Evangelical Mission in Basutoland (Lesotho) threatened to become independent from the mission church.

By 1882 - 1884, the Methodist minister Nehemia Tile (Saayman 1991:56) (see also Hammond 1974:418) was protesting against the undue White control of the Church. He wanted to integrate more traditional and national elements into the worship of the church. He formed the Tembu National Church with the Paramount Chief Ngangelizwe as its national head. One should therefore not obscure the fact that the above-mentioned three (Ntsikana, Soga, and Tile) became the founders of African Independent Churches in South Africa. Their history was in line with the total development towards the growth of AICs in South Africa in those days - as supposedly a new transformed Church from the Missionary Colonial Western Church.

Nehemiah Tile was described as father of the AIC movement (Lamola 1986:5-14). He spoke about “Black Consciousness” and “Common Blackness” more than a century ago. This was a movement which confronted the ruling powers. Others again confronted the old traditional forces and made their own decisions where they would stay, what occupation they would take, which religious denomination they would join - the mere fact that they joined or established their own church was a reaction against colonial tradition. Others accepted the freedom to choose their marriage partners, their friends and even their enemies.

Similar breaks also took place in the Berlin Mission, in the Transvaal in 1890, the causes of which were largely the result of resentment of White missionary control and disciplinary regulations. The Black communities were always excluded from the processes of nation building in their mother

⁹Ntsikana could not read the Bible, however he was regarded as the “African prophet” since he could go directly to the people and inspire religious and political movements. His claim that God was revealed to him became attractive to many Xhosas and strengthened his following.

¹⁰Tiyo Soga, unlike Ntsikana, was educated. He was also preaching towards attaining the unity in the Black Churches.

land. Unfortunately, among the AICs this has resulted in the splintering and proliferation of sects, and the process is still continuing. The number of these divisions is now running into thousands.

In 1885 Chief Nkgatlapane at Taung in the Northern Cape also founded the Native Independent Church which seceded from the London Missionary Society. One Anglican evangelist in 1889, Mr Khanyane Nape, defected only to form the African Church. He later cooperated with the Ethiopian Church. The Lutheran Bapedi Church (Lamola 1986) was formed in 1889 as a sequel to the serious disagreement that JA Winter, a German missionary, had with his seniors on their church policy of excluding Black people from responsible leadership positions.

The Methodist Church sent Rev James Mata Dwane¹¹ to England in 1894 to solicit funds for the church missionary work in South Africa. On his return in 1895 Dwane did not agree with the missionaries on how to use the money¹². By 1896 he had left the Methodist church and joined the Ethiopian Church. Already by 1890 Mbiana Ngidi led a secession from the Congregational Church (UCCSA) and formed the Zulu Mbiana Congregational Church. In 1896 Rev S Shipe broke away with his congregation from the American Board of Mission (UCCSA) when the missionary authorities wanted to place it with a new mission society. Shipe formed the Zulu Congregational Church.

A Methodist Local preacher in Johannesburg in 1892, Mr Mangena M Mokone, resigned from the church with the hope of starting a better church (see Pauw in Hammond- Tooke 1974:418). His reason for the breakaway was the practice of racial segregation in the Wesleyan Church. He, together with Khanyane Nape, S J Brander and Jonas Gaduka established a new church known as the Ethiopian Church.

¹¹ Sigxibo Dwane, the great grand child of James Mata Dwane, confirmed that his grant father went on his own to England (Dwane 1999 : 24-25). See also Mokhele (2000:16-17). The work of Mokhele is however not yet published although available in the Department of Church History. (See the list of references at the end of this dissertation).

¹² Missionaries wanted to put the money in the trust fund of the church, while Dwane wanted the money to be utilised for educational purposes. For example he wanted to build a non denominational academic college for African boys and girls where various training skills would be provided (Mokhele 2000:17).

The first meeting of the African Independent Church leaders was convened in 1892 by Mangena Mokone (United Churches of Christ) to discuss the issue of seeking affiliation with the A.M.E in the United States (Hammond 1974:418). James Dwane succeeded in going to America as delegate of the Independent Church leaders. The African Methodist Episcopal Church was formed by the Afro Americans in 1896 in protest against the racism of the American Methodist Church. Pauw (in Hammond-Tooke 1974:418-19) writes:

Important subsequent developments were the incorporation in 1896 of most of the members of the Ethiopian Church into the (American Negro) African Episcopal Church, and the acceptance in 1900 of many AMEC members, mostly in the Ciskei, into the Church of Province of South Africa (Anglican) with retention of a semi-independent identity as the 'Order of Ethiopia'.

In 1898 P J Mzimba, a pastor of the Lovedale congregation of the United Free Church of Scotland (Presbyterian Church), broke loose from the hegemony of the Scottish Mission and founded the African Presbyterian Church. The American Negro Baptist Church started missionary work in Natal. Their converts, calling themselves *amakhushi*, the Cushites according to Psalm (68:31), formed themselves into the African Native Baptist Church. By nineteen hundred the feeling of dissatisfaction with the relationship between the Negro AME and the South African AME resulted in James Dwane and his followers joining the Anglican Church (CPSA) as the Order of Ethiopia.

Daniel Brander, one of the overseers (Bishops) of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, the great Zionist Church in USA, founded by JA Dowie in 1896, visited South Africa and through his evangelistic campaigns gained a number of followers. One of them, a Dutch Reformed missionary, P L Le Roux, in 1908 together with several African Christians formed the Zion Apostolic Church. Bishop Mpumbi Chidembo, a migrant worker in Johannesburg from Zimbabwe, returned home as an Ethiopian bishop in 1910 and there he founded the "First Ethiopian Church" (F.E.C).

The Transvaal Interdenominational African Ministers Association (TIAMA) the forerunner of the Interdenominational African Ministers Association (IDAMASA¹³) was formed in 1915. IDAMASA was founded in 1946 as an inclusive association which united all provincial and regional African Ministers' Associations or Fraternal in South Africa. As an association of ministers and not churches, it included the African clergy people from both mainline mission churches, and the African Independent Churches.

Several Zionist Churches were born from the Zionist Apostolic Church could be identified in many parts of South Africa. Chief among them became the Christian Apostolic Church of P Mabiletsa, the Zionist Apostolic Church of South Africa and the Christian Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion of Nkonyane. A conference of leaders of African Independent Churches was convened in 1919 in Bloemfontein by Rev. E L Mkhise, an Anglican priest. The purpose of the conference was to work out the possibilities of uniting all African Independent Churches into one body with one doctrine. The matter was subsequently taken over by the African National Congress (ANC) and a drive was set for the establishment of the United National Church of South Africa.

In 1931 the ANC undertook, the issues of 1919¹⁴, as its concern for Appealing to Black Christians for the formation of a single¹⁵ 'African Church'. Such a church would be under the auspices of the Congress. The concern of the Congress was that a multiplicity of different African denominations throughout the country encouraged disunity among the people. At the same time the ANC were

¹³Read subsection 2.7 IDAMASA and the development of Black Theology in Chapter 2. It seems that in the early days of missionary work in South Africa, Churches did not struggle much about the issue of Black Mainline, versus AIC Churches for the mere fact that White Western missionaries themselves were dominating the scene so it was always Blacks versus Whites.

¹⁴The issues of 1919 recaptured the period when the African National Congress under the leadership of Gumedé T J was drafting the Organisation's constitution (Gerhart 1977:34-35). At that time Gumedé was one of the leaders encouraging the African mine strike of 1920. Also Makgomo Manyane (in Gerhart 1977:81-82) the founder of ANC Women's League lead a demonstrations protesting proposals to extend passes to women. ANC in general was looking for solidarity of all Black people in South Africa against unacceptable government laws.

¹⁵The Native Representative Council in Pretoria appointed a commission in 1944 to investigate a review of the procedure for government recognition of African Independent Churches. It was because of the agitation and work of the Natives Independent Churches Union of South Africa. By 1960 the South African government Census Report (Lainola 1986:7) revealed that 25% of the South African population belonged to the AICs (in 1946 it was 8%), 12% to the Methodist Church (in 1946 it was 13%), 7% to the Anglican Church (in 1946 it was still 7%), and also the Roman Catholic Church (in 1946 it was 3%).

comfortable in dealing with Black people through the AICs, unlike the Mainline Churches who included Whites as well. This reason was significant for the solidarity of the Black nation.

The Mainline Churches and the missionary societies in South Africa in 1936 grouped themselves together to form the Christian Council of South Africa. Its main constitutional function was to organise the periodical conferences of the representatives of the Mainline Churches and the Missionary Societies for consultation “upon the spiritual and general welfare of the European races”. No African Independent Church was invited to participate in the formation of this council. The “Native Independent Churches Union of South Africa” was founded in 1937 in Natal. Professor John T Jabavu (Gerhart 1977:41) released a pamphlet entitled “An African Indigenous Church” where he argued for unity among all Africans in South Africa.

However, through the facilitation of the Christian Institute (West 1975:152-153), the African Independent Church Association (AICA) was formed in 1965. The main objective was to enhance the training of the leaders of African Independent Churches. In 1976 about 46 churches, instigated by Rev Mthembu, broke away from AICA, and in conjunction with Ds N Loggerenberg formed the Reformed Independent Church Association (RICA). Through the assistance of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the South African Theological College of Independent Churches (SATCIC) was formed with Bishop Mokwena as chairman of its Board, which collapsed in 1978. The Council of African Independent Churches, an alliance of ten associations of AICs was founded in 1980 (Lamola 1986:8).

2.3. EARLY RESEARCH ON AIC THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE

Whites have for a while championed the field of AICs by producing volumes of material during the process. Perhaps a few outstanding ones should be mentioned to support this allegation. Maluleke (1996:29) has urged the readers of the material produced on AICs to have a good understanding of the background against which the AICs were viewed. The reason for the secessionist movement was that they were not given a chance by White establishments to lay their matter on the table. He felt that although the White researchers have done appreciable work they could not ascertain that they had fully explored the AIC field.

However it will be imperative to mention a few, amongst others, who have done an immense work in the field of the AICs. Maluleke has already referred to Sundkler (1961:16) lament for the impoverishment caused by the absence of the Black Scholars of the AICs:

...I am fully conscious that my account does not reach the heart of the matter. I doubt, whether any outsider can achieve that. However sympathetic attitude the White observer may take, he remains - an outsider. The Bantu Churches of South Africa have not yet got - as the Negroes of the United State have - their own Richard Wright to record the rhythm of Black voices and to feel the heartbeat of the Black man's longing and aspirations.

The lack of resources amongst African Black researchers became a concern to some Whites. Anderson (1995:286) realised that this factor would be frustrating and weakening the effort to bring the Black researchers on level from time to time. To reiterate the fact that the field of AIC theological research has been mainly dominated by Whites is not going to help (Maluleke 1996:24). Nor will it be helpful to speculate about the possible reasons for this. The same reasons that have kept Blacks out of higher learning (including theological training), research in general, teaching at institutions of higher learning, and church leadership are probably applicable here.

The gap between the research work on the field of AICs by Whites and Blacks is a matter of factual scrutiny in order to put the already existing information into perspective. The other reason for the minimal material production among the Black researchers on AICs should not be necessarily seen as a lack of interest Maluleke (1996:25) but rather a lack of financial resources. The overdose of White written resources on the AIC should be given cognisance, however, the prominent White AIC writers are still emphasising that there is a considerable impoverishment of AIC research in general.

The Government Commission's report of 1925¹⁶ has an important outcome with a bearing on the study of separatist churches. Although their intentions were less than noble according to Maluleke (1996:29), most of its field workers researched data which deliberately had to go through the Native Churches Commission for census purposes. There were even much earlier Native Affairs Commissions between 1903-1905. The chief research tools of these government commissions were verbal interviews and questionnaires.

The following categories emerged from the Native Commission of 1903 - 1905, "loyal Black Mission members", news papers editors, White missionaries and Independent Church Leaders. Many ordinary members were not interviewed (Maluleke 1996:30) and as a result many questions can be asked about such matters as: the legitimacy of all White male commissions, also the legitimacy of its objectives in conducting interviews, the validity of the commission's almost exclusive reliance on (recorded) interviews, the choice of interviewees and authenticity of the evidence presented before them - at least by some of the groups interviewed. However, the unmistakable method employed must be acknowledged as such.

Allen Lea's work (1926) is regarded as the earliest monograph by a White missionary on the AICs (Maluleke 1996:30). He regarded the government commission into the separatist churches (1925) as an important inspiration not only for his own interest in the separatist churches but for that of many others. The commission's researched material was acknowledged by Lea as the most important source of reference for his work. He has relied heavily on library resources rather than going into the field itself, and this to Maluleke was a genuine academic exercise. Thus Lea has not engaged himself in the observation of the phenomenon he has discussed. This has led to the incompleteness on his research among the AICs.

¹⁶The Government Commission was credited for doing the study of the separatist churches, up against growing anti-White feeling among the natives. The first report was published in 1925. That commission was occasioned by the Bullhoek massacre in 1921(Lea 1926:13). His own verdict on the massacre was as follows: "The tragedy of Bullhoek in May 1921 is a sad instance of the blending of poor understanding of Christian Religion with foolish desire to get rid of the White man"(15).

Sundkler's being a pioneer on the AICs did not make him the pioneer in the research methodology itself. There were examples of missionaries, who constructed the orthographies of local languages, who were also directly or indirectly involved in similar work to that of Sundkler. The following are notable: Moffat, Paul and Henry Berthoud, Eugene Thomas, HA Junod and others as examples of those Missionaries who were actively engaged in the field from where they gathered their resource material for publications and other interests.

Sundkler (1964:179) also stated that White Missionaries should be careful not to take a share of responsibility for the situation within the AIC groups. Which responsibilities for "Whites" is he referring to? Perhaps the answer to the very question could be traced from the statement which Sundkler previously made in the same paragraph (1964:179) that:

Bantu Independent Churches are an outcome of the political social and denominational situation in South Africa. Without deep going changes in these fields we must expect that strong inherent leadership qualities of the Bantu will express themselves in terms of Utopia movements such as those described here.

The above paragraph will therefore justify Maluleke's concern about only partial commitment to the struggle among the AICs by White scholars, of which Sundkler seems to be a good example in his research into these churches. Maluleke (1996:32) discovered the two values which Sundkler accepted: (a) In his observations, he evaluates the AICs in terms of "continuous principles which have been delivered to the Church". (b) He has also assumed that enforced racial discrimination was a factor in the emergence of AICs. He has drawn most of his resources from the Zulu assistants¹⁷ who were mainly the students at the Lutheran College in Natal.

¹⁷Sundkler firstly dispatched students to collect data through questionnaires, which was a risky business. Suspicions about accuracy, honesty and trust surfaced, which have created a sense of hesitation to readily accept Sundkler's conclusions, and this is understandable. However, this does not declare Sundkler's work invalid since it is the base on which both White and Black scholars can dialogue on research done among the AICs. At the same time it is for the AICs to judge the material on the table and make suggestions.

The other factor which cannot be ignored is the use of various names of the African Independent Churches key leaders. Among others included are Mma Nku, Makgatho, Mokone, Mpitso, Mooki, Morola, Mosaka, Napo, Nkonyane, Nthusi etc., reflect the fragile¹⁸ barriers of Sundkler's territory, especially because similar names belong to the great Independent Churches among the Sotho speaking groups in the then Transvaal province. Xhosa speaking groups are also mentioned. The title of Sundkler's book, i.e. "Bantu Prophets in South Africa", allows him to go so far, but he restricted himself by confining his research to Zulus only, a restriction which his book did not always comply with.

Oosthuizen followed almost the same pattern as Sundkler but his methodological approach of reaching the AICs was the participation observation method. When his method was analysed Maluleke (1996:33) it included: (a) the list of a questionnaire and selected workers to conduct interviews; (b) the participation observation method was used, (c) and the use of data collection and analysis of written documents followed. Oosthuizen interviewed pastors and ordinary members of the Pentecostal Churches. The difference was that he was actively involved himself.

Maluleke (1996:33) acknowledges that Oosthuizen was able to read and evaluate his position among the groups, who sometimes made him feel guilty, because of their clapping of hands which was not part of his religious culture. He also acknowledged the socio-cultural differences between himself and the specific groups. The question of being too much involved was regarded as a danger since it could obscure or interrupt the genuine flow of information.

2.4 RELEVANT VIEWS OF CONTEMPORARY RESEARCHERS

It was Anderson (1992 and 1993) who started by confessing that he was not a Black African, but quickly added that if African is meant to signify the love for the continent and people of Africa or commitment towards African ideal, then he will support the idea (1991:2). His main studies are in the field of African Pentecostal Churches.

¹⁸Sundkler stated that (1964:14)"this study pertains almost exclusively to conditions within one South African, the Zulu, tribe". It could be concluded that Sundkler's research was done at a time when he was confronted with few criticisms. This often gives a researcher wide space for exaggeration, unaware of the other issues, simply because of the broad field of research.

In his second major work "Tumelo" (1993) he describes his method as that of participant observation that "he has been a participant observer in African Pentecostal Churches for more than two decades". His works are the fruit of the participant research conducted at Soshanguve, a township on the outskirts of Pretoria. He used assistants and questionnaires, and the proportionate random sampling. He also interviewed a reasonably representative portion of the population of Soshanguve.

Unlike the earlier study, described as more quantitative according to Maluleke (1996:34), the second is described as more qualitative: "...We want people to talk about their Churches and their conviction rather than answer a stereotyped questionnaire" Anderson (1993:9). His assistants were armed with less structured but more probing questions and tape recorders. The same assistants would later be used to translate interviews into English. The dominant themes of the interviews were accommodation and confrontation between the Churches and the African traditional world-view. A distinct bias in Anderson's research, which sets him apart from West (1975) was that instead of concentrating on interviewing the leaders, he interviewed ordinary people.

Philpott, the other researcher on the AICs, claimed a method which falls within the participatory paradigm. This method is regarded to be committed social change and the redressing of the power relation between the researcher and the researched. He introduced participatory research Maluleke (1996:36) as having developed as a reaction to the positivistic and empiricist research paradigm of the late fifties and sixties. These traditional research models, were according to Philpott,

...based upon the idea of controlled and objective measurement, classification and of data in relation to hypotheses and theories. The researcher is required to be a value free observer, and the results are regarded as objectively true facts concerning the reality which has been studied (Philpott 1993:21).

The above is what Philpott's research intends not to be. Philpott advances three reasons for the inadmissibility of the old research models according to Maluleke (1996:36-37), namely (a) the impossibility of an objective researcher, (b) the impracticability of the assumption that "small

sections of social reality can be isolated and experimented with, without the interference of outside conditions”, and (c) the awareness that traditional research tends to empower the researcher and perpetuate the powerlessness of the researched.

Philpott was aware of three crucial themes in all research, namely participation, knowledge and power. The most significant is the emphasis on participation, not so much of the observer (which is built in anyway) as the participation of the researched on all levels of the research process. The crucial process was how Philpott went about applying the above insight in the conduct of his Bible Study group meeting at the Amawoti Squatter Camp.

Naude's research methodology has a heavy and explicit theological agenda. His concern was to incorporate “the unwritten theology of millions of people onto a broader ecumenical framework”. He investigated a small group of ZCCs near Venda according to Maluleke (1996:38). The outcomes were like-those of Philpott which have (participant) observer-based research methodologies at they're most critical and most sophisticated.

The point at which Maluleke is driving (1996:41), is that “sources can speak for themselves only before we lay our hands, eyes and minds on them”. He continued to state that even in Philpott and Naude, throughout, their theoretical reflections on methodology are easier said than done. Philpott's research project in Amawoti was more qualitative than beneficial to the community. A careful reading of Naude reveals that he was listening more to himself and his academic colleagues than the ZCC peasants' congregation. He made short visits which did not place him in a good condition to claim that his work was thorough.

Genuine humility and modesty must inspire all theological research. It must also extend to the value of the research findings. Grass-root theologians must lower their expectations of what their research can attain either for Theology or for the communities being researched. For this reason Maluleke (1996:42) has cited Daneel as an exception, as demonstrated by his life long commitment to Zimbabwean AICs. Our research can truly empower the community if one makes a lifelong commitment to being a perpetual student with those communities.

Having presented samples on White research work, a similar fair deal will be required by the Black side as well. It could un-categorically be stated that White researchers were in the commanding seat in terms of researching the AICs. There are, however, a few Blacks who have shown keen interest in the subject. In most cases they emerged as minors or as part of the white published material.

The publication "Our approach to the African Independent Church Movement", Missiological Institute Department of Lutheran Theological College in Mapumulo in Natal, 1965 is helpful in portraying a picture of some Black scholars who were actively involved in writing the very document. Out of fifteen written researched articles forming the component structure of "the course" work, only one African researcher's works, Rev. Makhathini's two articles, are included. One is entitled "Ancestors, Umoya and Angels" while the other one is "Our relationship to the Separatist Churches of the Ethiopian Types".

Black researchers like Vilakazi have published several articles on the AICs, like Isonto la Manazaretha: The Church of the Nazarite (an unpublished thesis MA Thesis), Hartford 1954. Also Vilakazi with Mthethwa B and Mpanza M published Shembe, the Revitalization of African Society: Braamfontein 1986. The other researchers have mainly sporadically written theses like Monyai K E 1990 The African Catholic Church (MTh), Unisa. Kuzwayo Z 1980. A history of Ethiopianism in South Africa with particular reference to the American Zulu Mission from 1835-1908. (MA Thesis) Pretoria. Unisa. Budaza, G. S. The Native Separatist Church Movement. (MTh). Unisa 1948.

There are a few other contributions by Blacks which are worthy to be noted (cf Millard 1995:40-49). At the sixth annual General Missionary conference (1926), a Rev BS Diepu read a paper entitled "Native separate church movements and their relationship to the problem of evangelism". In the Year Book of South African Mission by Dexter, published in 1927, one of the two articles on the AICs written by the Rev Allen Lea on the separatist churches belongs to Rev L Mzimba (a son of the secessionist). Maluleke considers Mzimba's article (1927:90) to be important because it was written by an insider.

Mayatula wrote another important article for three reasons: its early date, its discussion of the AIC from within the framework of Black Theology and the fact that Mayatula was himself a member of a Zionist Church. Several articles by Black people also appear in Oosthuizen's book (1986), which was the result of consultation. Notable amongst these is Ngubane (1986a) and Setiloane (1986). Then there is the thesis of Khuzwayo (1979), Lukhaimane (1980) and Moeti (1981). The works of Makhubu and Vilakazi were published in 1986.

A year earlier, under the aspects of the ICT, Bishop Ngada et al., in 1985 published Speaking for Ourselves. Other Black writers, especially those within Black and African Theology circles, have referred quite frequently to the AICs during the 1980's -Ngubane (1986b) Motlhabi (1986, 1984), Mosala (1995). Among Black writers on the AICs, the work of Vilakazi (1986) appears to be thorough and the most akin to White scholarship in methodology. In order to move the debate further along, it is necessary that I now present my own view of what I consider to be the most important characteristic of both Black theology and the theology of the AICs

2.5 SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF AIC THEOLOGY

An evaluation of the theology of the AICs should be based on the fact that theology is not a closed system. There is no such thing as purely grassroots theology, devoid of intellectualism (Maluleke 1996:43). The use of the word grassroots will be for more differences of emphasis, commitment and bias. It should be kept in mind that AICs are founded by African spiritual leaders who want to show the world that the African person wants to worship God his or her own way, in a form that satisfies his or her spiritual and emotional needs.

The causes of the emergence of the AICs are various, but perhaps the initial and most important ones were the exposure of the newly converted Christians to the Bible in translation into their mother tongue. This gave the converts a chance to listen to God's Word directly, without the trappings of a foreign culture. Another reason could have been spiritual hunger, as a result of the constrictions and controls imposed by the missionaries on the followers.

Religions in traditional life were an integral part of daily living, and many African Christians wanted to achieve this synthesis. Thirdly, charismatic preaching and ministry of spiritual healing by African prophets, who were poorly educated but who were endowed with spiritual powers, attracted many followers. A fourth reason was the need to protect indigenous customs and culture as a means of preserving African identity and roots.

2.5.1 An Enacted Theology

African Independent Churches have attracted many followers among the uneducated, oppressed and marginal classes of African society (Battle 1984:1). These churches have always been intimate touch with the needs and frustrations of the disadvantaged and the dispossessed; they have been able to develop relevant types of Christian communities and new forms of liturgies that express their faith with body and soul through dancing and singing. Members of these churches rely strongly on their faith to withstand the forces of evil such as sorcery, sickness and death.

Generally speaking, the AICs have no links with Western churches; they received no overseas assistance (funds, grants or personnel). They are shaped around what is known as the “Three Self Formulae” (Self-Governing, Self-Supporting, Self-Propagating). They do what has for a long time been the goal of the missionary policy of many mission boards. Another characteristic of AICs according to Battle (1984:2) is the adaptation of various cultural elements into their theologies and ceremonies, meaning that their theologies are rooted in the context of their real life in the world.

Most of the AICs, binding doctrinal statements and constitutions, beside what is required by the law, are sacrificed for the sake of a free community which, by God’s grace, makes each individual church unique. Often Christians from the mission churches have wondered if these Independent Churches are indeed Christian, but if the Biblical account of the New Testament churches is an authority, which indeed it is, it can only be concluded that the Independent Churches are closer models to the original church than the Mainline churches.

A careful observation of the AICs shows that they achieve their spontaneous growth and own selfhood because no outside dominating presence influences their structure. They are free from being ecclesiastical colonies. In some parts of the world, such as Chile in South America, where the Independent Churches are growing rapidly, they confront no difficulties in the search for identity. But the Mainline churches, products of traditional “ecclesiasticism”, remain very small groups, depending on parental bodies in the North, which frustrates their “selfhood”. The growth of these Independent churches is so great that the ratio is one million Independent church members to a few thousand who belong to the Mainline churches.

In Africa, Ghana (Accra) for example, some neighbourhoods have one Independent church for almost every two hundred metres. Most of these churches have no fixed form of worship and depend on the Holy Spirit to guide the form worship will take. Those churches are also free from cultural, political and ecclesiastical displacement, since by joining them people are not alienated from their traditional culture. Mbiti (1969:75) puts it this way:

The spiritual world of African peoples is very densely populated with the spiritual beings, spirits and the living dead. He supported his statement by mentioning the words of Idowu (1973:174) stating that Spirits, according to African belief, is ubiquitous; there is no area of the earth, no object or creature, which has not a spirit of its own which cannot be inhabited by a spirit.

Bishop F Ntsuntsha (interview 15 February 1988) of the Christian Apostolic Catholic Church in Zion viewed the African Independent Theology, especially among the Zionists, as a mingling with tradition. It is a new wine in the old bottle as he puts it. To him the concept of God is related to the African traditional understanding of their deities such as Tswana - Modimo, Zulu - Unvelingqangi and Xhosa - Qamata.

The ancestors, sacrifices, sickness and divine healing, Jesus Christ and the Bible are often indistinguishable. They become the essence of formulating a Theology which is understandable to them and their followers. The concept of remission of sins through the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22) is important simply because it is in line with the slaughtering concept to appease

Modimo le Badimo or God and the Ancestors. They often are suspicious towards accepting Jesus Christ's blood as the only way to remedy individual sins. They normally emphasise that Christ died for us but not for an individual. According to the Zionists the Bible is the word of God but their prophecy has more weight in their lives. Old Testament teaching is the most favoured simply because of cultural identity and interest.

2.5.2 A Sung Theology

In the previous section we have indicated the AIC theology as the theology of the context. African music and its instruments, as well as the dancing and singing that goes with instruments cannot be done without. Brass-band, drums, rattles, horns, and guitars are common musical instruments. The hymns are short: some of them consist of Bible quotations, some have been composed by the church members through special (imibono noma ditoro) revelations and dreams. Some are the same as those in the Mainline churches.

Brass-band choirs are related to the idea of the Levites in the Old Testament. The silver trumpet for example, according to Numbers (10:1-10) in the Bible, portrays the significance, of blowing these two silver trumpets. Specific persons are allocated to do such work. They will be sounded for both war and celebrations (verse: 9 and 10) such as feasts and festivals, for the burnt offerings and fellowships. These trumpets are memory for them and their God.

Trumpets are revealed in dreams, and also the places from where they will be purchased. Bishop Bikisha in Sharpville for example indicated (interview April 1988) that his were revealed in a dream and that his would be purchased in England, but he "has never visited that country". Instead a musician from England, owning a music store in Vereeniging, helped him to get his own set. The idea of receiving instruments through revelations and visions is common among the Saint John Apostolic Faith Mission Churches. Old stocks are commonly purchased from the army brass bands and music instrument stores throughout the country.

The instruments are said to be of utmost significance among the AICs. Psalm 150 expatiates on and encourages the use of different forms of music instruments in the Churches to praise the Lord. The Psalm is taken literally especially since the Black community likes singing and dancing. Music

of mainline churches is also highly useful among the AICs eg. Difela tsa Sione or Qilongo, the Songs of Praise, the Lutheran Hymn Books for example are among many which are used by the AIC groups.

Songs are actually the other means of communication to the ancestors and God, singing a song carries a strong message in itself. If a song is sung well, it could take someone into the transcendental spheres. In other words, emotions are signs of close links with the ancestors and God. At the same time it should be understood that songs are also a force of inspiration. There are also political songs which have a rhythm suitable for such moments. The skins of the slaughtered sheep, goats or beasts for ceremonial purposes are used to design drums for musical purposes. Drums are means to draw the attention of the ancestors. There are also choral music singers, commonly known as Mmino wa Barorisi (the Praise Songs singers). Their music starts from self-composed songs to the mixture of the existing written Hymnals. The clapping of hands also helped to chase away demons but also gave a melodious backup for the singers.

Singing among the AICs cannot be separated from the essence of their main services. When a text is chosen to be deliberated upon, all the members who attend that service, led by the Holy Spirit, will deliberate it on. Music will then interrupt from time to time, to give others a chance to share their views on the same text. In most instance services do not have a specific length, rather they depend on the Spirit. However, due to many interruptions such as lack of church properties in the form of structures, services are held in rented places such as existing churches, schools and community halls. As a result a specific time frame does determine the duration of the services and that is why open spaces are preferred most.

Shembe's Hymnody can be referred to here as an example. Its influence is on the ethical standard and world view of the Amanazaretha. His hymns portray the feelings of someone who is aware of the political afflictions of his fellow brothers and sisters. Mthethwa (1989:4) picked on hymn 46 which he believed could be interpreted as: today we are the laughing stock, slaves and doormats for wiping the feet of the foreigners.

The other controversial dance hymn is number 183 “Lalela Zulu”. This hymn when paraphrased would be: “listen my countrymen”, “here are White people pestering us about our land and laying us to waste”. Some of the hymns were not published in 1940, when the hymnal first came off the press, because they were too provocative for the government system. One such hymn would be “Abezizwe” which is still popular today in religious dance.

The theme of this unpublished hymn, “Abezizwe” (foreigners) revolves around the African folktales where a hungry trickster was able to kill an innocent old woman so that he could eat her flesh. This hymn when paraphrased is: the foreigners tried to get rid of us but we shall survive. Within this attitude of anxiety, Shembe seems to know the answer to the political problems by seeing Jesus Christ as the liberator from both sin and oppression. Hymn number two is a testimony to this. In this hymn Jesus is the indestructible liberator.

Different songs expressed different conditions including sadness, happiness, war, praise, thanksgiving among others. To cite the example choruses like the following have special meaning to the singers:

(a) Song and translation in English:

<i>Mahlomoleng a ka</i>	<i>In my agony</i>
<i>Jesu o na le nna</i>	<i>Jesus is with me</i>
<i>Ditsietsing melekong</i>	<i>In troubles and tribulations</i>
<i>Jesu o na le nna</i>	<i>Jesus is with me</i>

These songs above express the pain or agony which a person, family, congregation, or community may undergo and such songs were also sung during the difficult times of struggle in South Africa. They are also sung during funeral services or sensitive church services, like when the “Holy communion” is celebrated. Another chorus has the following words:

(b) Song and translation in English:

<i>Athe Jesu one a mpona</i>	<i>Only to find that Jesus was looking at me</i>
<i>Ha ke lela jena</i>	<i>When I was crying like that</i>

A mpitsa a re tlo ho nna He called and said come unto me
O fole Matswalo Your fears must be alleviated.

This chorus is commonly sung at funerals. It is sung by various Black peoples. The translated version would be; Jesus saw me as I was crying like that. He called me and “figuratively” would read; In sorrows, in trials and temptations, Jesus is always with me. He called and ordered for good health from shock “of death or any agony”.

Similar songs are found in all traditional languages with similar meanings. Sometimes the tone and tune of the song are different but the meaning is the same. Songs among the AICs are linked with messages from the Bible, politics and environment. There are varieties of meaningful words included in both choruses and hymnals which express inner feeling and meaningfulness for the AIC singer:

Words like Amakholwa or believers; Evangeli lexolo or Evangeli of peace or forgiveness; Modimo o tlhodile or God has created; Masakhane or let us build each other; Phenduka Namhlanje or change today; Bana ba Kutullo or Children of revelation; Jerusalem e Ncha or New Jerusalem; Rapellang Jerusalem or Pray for Jerusalem; Haleluja Ithemba Lethu or Praise unto our hope; Batshwarele or forgive them. Tsonga and Venda “songs” and “hymns” featured strongly in the collections of songs among the AICs.

The other interesting song is hymn number 269 from the Wesleyan hymn book, titled Yemini Yesabatha (the day of the Sabbath). The last two lines of the song were translated into Xhosa as follows:

Ithemba lam translated my hope

Ndo nyuka nalo translated I will rise with it

Mandingene endumisweni translated when enter into praise.

This song can be sung on various occasions including political ones, but its rhythm is vigorous, emotional and exciting. It is commonly known among Blacks with a heavy tone, it is also exiting to men since the tenor singers start first. The words of the song are emotional, comforting,

praising and Spirit filled. The above songs are but the tip of an iceberg, since there are many more. The songs portray different meanings and feelings for the singers themselves. Songs like “Masakhane” and “Evangeli lexolo” appeal for forgiveness, unity and mutual assistance.

2.5.3 Theology in Relation to the political Authorities

Most of the members of the AICs see the task of the Church as working for reconciliation, that the church has a political responsibility which cannot be denied. It is a responsibility that can be seen as priestly, kingly and prophetic according to Hayes (1990:18-28).¹⁹ The priestly service consists mainly of intercession for the political leaders of all parties that they are given wisdom and compassion to govern as people governed by God. The response in interviews showed that about 70% of subjects (Kitshof 1989:6) agreed that the church should “pray for the government and for all the people in high responsible positions”.

What is stated in the above paragraph, does not mean that AICs are merely happy to pray for the politicians in authority, they also seek a way of being physically involved with those who are in authority, in order to share their grievances and frustrations with them. In most of the interviews conducted, they have raised their concerns about this. A similar experience of the grassroots communities coming face to face with authorities including those of the AICs was at the Multi Event '99 that was held in Cape Town in February 1999. The presentation from the groups representing the “voice of the voiceless” was remarkable. The following paragraphs will elaborate this point.

A scripture which expressed their isolation and destitution read as follow:

“After I looked and before me was a great multitude that no one could count... Then one of the elders asked me: These in white robes -who are they, and where did they come from?” Rev 7:9a,13. The representatives of the grassroots communities were estranged from the parliamentarians at the Multi Event 99 conference. This scriptural text was read to break the ice,

¹⁹The priestly, kingly and prophetic ministries (see Hayes 1990: 49-53) seems to be contradictory in that some views suggest that the government claims an authority higher than that of the church while others seem to be supporting the authority of the church as being higher than that of human governance. However one may assume that those who pray for the human governance do so while on the understanding that God is all - powerful.

also as a way of introducing them to a strange environment.

However, they represented the voices from the periphery of this country's social, political economic and religious structures. Various specific religious communities with their own unique names were represented. According to them they are the backbone of religious institutions but also the foundation on which the South African democratic state is built. When they are apathetic and doing nothing the foundation is like sand on which no stable structure, be it religious or political, can stand.

Their religious character, Christianity in this case, makes them spiritually strong. Religion may be associated with economics and politics and is found in church buildings, synagogues, mosques, temples and shrines. This is true to some extent but it is definitely not true of AICs. They do not end in church buildings. They are found in the public spaces, to function as agents of transformation, but this is not enough, it is their religious calling and faith conviction which has encouraged them to worship anywhere.

It should also be taken into consideration that they are spurred on by both specific religious convictions and the *ubuntu* value they espouse as Africans. They have taken initiatives to alleviate some of the ills of our troubled country, such as rampant crime rates, violence of all sorts, alcohol abuse, ecological and environmental disasters, unemployment with its offspring poverty, and HIV/AIDS. These are viewed as threats not only to their livelihood as human beings, but also their existence as part of the South African community.

If their convictions propel them to embark on noble projects like the ones mentioned above, not benefiting only religious people but also the communities at large, can it still be said that AICs are purely personal and private groups that have no relevance or role to play in public life? This perhaps could be one significant encounter with Black Theology. There are Black theologians (of liberation) who hold high ranks in the parliament²⁰ of South Africa, such as Sister Ncube and

²⁰Mosala was once the Chief Director in the Education Department but is now the head of the Setlogelo Technikon near Ga-Rankuwa in North West. It should be clear that the above mentioned are not necessarily members of the AICs, but they were all sympathetic towards the AICs especially, Chikane and Mosala.

Reverends Chikane, Chabangu, Mkhathswa and Mosala among others.

The government in turn did however embark on projects empowering grassroots communities in South Africa. This became an opportunity for the government authorities to rub shoulders with the peripheral communities. One such example was A Tirelo Setshaba Job Creation and Community building project in Atteridgeville. A group of the AIC Bishops are involved in all the activities of the project with the intention of encouraging their respective members to get involved in the project.

From within the same project a number of government departments were involved, such as the Departments of Agriculture, Health and Land Affairs. All these were through the efforts of the ordinary members headed by an AIC member from various denominational backgrounds; the chair for example, Rev Mohlolo, is from the ZCC. In the committee were also Bishop Khomola and Rev Nazo, also leaders from the AICs.

In the interview of Rev Mengoai (transcript 1994:12) of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, when asked what his views were about the role of the Churches in South Africa, responded by stating that the role of the Church would simply be to reprimand the government of the day for the wrongs it is doing. During the banning of great political organisations, PAC and ANC the Church was there to criticise their banning. He indicated that they were detained several times by the police as members of a church representing the nation and all these things have gone unnoticed. The Church is the conscience of the people and it will still have to be there as the conscience of the people and to remind the government if it does wrong. And that is why (1994:12) as the church we cannot isolate politicians from God.

The African Catholic Church of Rev Makinita (interview transcript 1995:15) is another example of a church which has taken political issues seriously. The building in Atteridgeville was erected in 1946 and during the 1976 riots it was already open to the main Black Political organisations, to hold meetings. The Church was in flames in 1993 due to intolerance among the political groups which used to hold meetings there, but it has since been rebuilt.

2.5.4 Women and Theology

In the African Independent Churches leaders (men) must be married before they can be ordained as ministers or bishops. The wives must stand by the side of their husbands even though they are not given the same status. Wives however will assume certain responsibilities according to Wartson (1989:1) merely because they are wives of the “umfundisi”, bishop or archbishop. The wife of the local minister becomes the leader of the women in her congregation. She becomes responsible for the spiritual guidance of women, and coordinates special prayer visits to the homestead of those who are ill. Other activities such as prayer services, including preparing bread and juice for the Lord’s Supper are conducted under her supervision.

In the same way the Bishop’s wife is recognised as the leader of the women in the churches under the husband’s jurisdiction. For instance, Bishop Dlamini’s wife is the leader of all women of the CAHSCZ in Swaziland. In the Republic of South Africa, Bishop Ndaba’s wife has the same role for the Churches there. Archbishop Mkhize’s wife is the main leader of all women in both countries, and she is responsible for the guidance and direction of the whole women’s movement in the CAHSCZ. It is for this reason that the Archbishop has to remarry as soon after the death of his first wife as the rules governing mourning will allow.

While a woman does not have the full authority of her husband, she functions in his stead if he is absent. For example when her husband has to be away and misses a prayer service in his home congregation, it is the wife who directs the order of the service. She will decide who will lead the service. The person presiding will be a male, usually the evangelist, but he will have been told to preside by the minister’s wife.

To be more specific about this issue one should look at it from a broader perspective. In St. John’s, for example, women in many instances are autonomous in that they are not restricted by their husbands. Most of them are prophetesses but amazingly while enjoying that role they will appoint a man to lead the congregation while the prophet becomes subjugated to him, although she maintains the power to give orders need be. This perhaps could be coming from the traditional influence. It is as if doing things on their own is illegal. It should be emphasised that women among the AICs need to open up, like every woman in this country, in order that they are counted

in matters of transformation, especially in a struggle against the patriarchal history which favours the AICs males more than their women.

2.6 A BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE ORIGINS OF BLACK THEOLOGY

Black Theology in South Africa²¹ has emerged from a growing political consciousness among blacks and their recognition of their oppression and poverty. American Black Theology was a catalyst in its self discovery meaning that South African Black Theology has a relationship to the North America Black theology. The main focus in this essay will be based more on South African development. Many of the Black Theologians are of the view that Black Theology was first traceable around the early seventies.

Even most White Theologians are of the same opinion. Perhaps Motlhabi (1983:5) was right when stating that Black Theology in South Africa, as a discipline has been a “non starter”. He goes on to state that perhaps it is because blacks here in general are so impatient to move ahead that, as in writing an examination, they had rather dealt with what seems “manageable” first and return to unfinished business later.

Black Theology, according to Motlhabi (in Moore 1973:78), is not a new theology nor a proclamation of a new gospel. It is merely a revolution of the gospel message, a making relevant of this message according to the situation of the people. It is the reinterpretation of the Scriptures in the light of the existential situation of daily Black experience. Its advocates, believe that Christ provides for souls, and for the entire life here and now, according to what is read in Luke (4:18): “The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to the blind new sight, to set the down trodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour”. In addition popular names in the seventies included Bishop Tutu, Manas Buthelezi, Maimela, Motlhabi, Mofokeng, Goba, Mosala, Tlhagale and Biko, to name but a few. To all of these scholars, attention to Black Theology was

²¹As this dissertation is not an analysis of Black Theology as such, I am not going to present a detailed history of its origins and growth. For such historical reviews, readers are referred to Moore (1973), Bruce and Jones (1978), Boesak (1977), and De Ghruchy (1979) among others these are regarded as significant as they give the history of the South African church, the context within which Black Theology was done.

the result of the immediate current political situation with 1976 as the culminating point.

Speaking for himself and the other black South Africans, Desmond Tutu (in Muzorewa 1985:107) declared that:

I myself believe I am an exponent of Black Theology, coming as I do from South Africa. I also believe that I am the exponent of African Theology, coming as I do from Africa. I contend that Black Theology is a smaller circle in a concentric circle. ...I and others from South Africa do Black Theology, which is for us, at this point, African Theology [Wilmore and Cone 1979:490].

The above-mentioned statement by Tutu seems to be limiting Black Theology and also shows lack of confidence whether such a theology could run a long marathon into the future. What Tutu has indicated seems to contradict what Cone has concurred, that:

In so far as Black Theology is a theology arising from identification with the oppressed Black Community and seeks to interpret the gospel of Jesus Christ in the light of the liberation of that community, it is Christian Theology [Cone 1972:25].

One could well partially support Motlhabi (in Moore 1973:78) and much more to support Cone on his statement simply because the issues of the struggle will never end among humanity. In most cases, solutions for peace are constantly challenged and threatened by perpetual misunderstandings among people themselves. Black Theology will always remain legitimate as long as there are cross-cultural tensions among communities in South Africa and other parts of the world. If this is the case then we have to functionalise Black Theology on fully historical social and religious trends.

However Tutu may be defended since his understanding of "Black" in its particularity is inclusive of the Black nation in South Africa. He will in my understanding argue that both mainline churches and the AICs are significant components of "blackness", if that is the case it is therefore not

necessary to discriminate about blackness. Seemingly Muzorewa was not conscious of this when citing Tutu²². Having given a brief overview of my understanding of the main characteristics of the two theologies, I now turn my attention to earlier efforts to synthesise the two positions.

2.7 IDAMASA AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK THEOLOGY

The early Interdenominational African Ministers Organisations (IDAMASA), which was originally known as the Transvaal Interdenominational African Ministers Association (TIAMA), was founded in 1915 (Khoapa 1972:30) at a time when the African National Congress (ANC) was picking up momentum. The leaders of this organisation, such as Mpitso, Chalata, Mahabane among others, helped the TIAMA to spread to many parts of South Africa. In 1945 regional organisations met in Bloemfontein where they fused and formed Interdenominational African Ministers Federation (IDAMF). This federation existed until 1965 and its main task was to find solutions to problems relating to Africans.

In 1965 IDAMF was transformed into IDAMASA through the adoption of a constitution that changed the organisation from a federation to an association. By 1972 IDAMASA had 117 branches from all over South Africa. The women's wing of the organisation was IDAMWASA (Interdenominational African Ministers' wives' Association of South Africa). A significant result of this organisation was its activities, which have involved interest in African Education, scholarship, research into African customs and traditions, youth work, promotion of activities among women, representations to local and national governmental bodies and creation of rapport amongst the various church or religious organisations.

At an IDAMASA Conference that was held in 1972 in Umtata it became clear that the organisation had taken a new direction towards social issues in the country. The various regions of the organisation (1972:31) had been commissioned by the Programmes Director to undertake the creation of workshops, each to tackle at least one major social issue in their localities. A variety of issues had been handled by the branches including faction fighting, scholarships,

²²See Tutu (1983:107) in his work *Hope and Suffering*. His interest is geared towards the understanding of Whites for Blacks. He also questions why Blacks were being discriminated against their fellow Whites irrespective of (Blacks) being Christian. Seemingly the main focus was on the struggle against White domination than development withing the Black nation itself.

educational syllabi, unity, building of centres, nursery schools, and experimental farming.

It was Rev de Waal Mahlasela, IDAMASA president (1972:32), in his opening speech who emphasised the need for Africans to dedicate themselves to the crystallisation and propagation of Black Theology. Indeed to them Black Theology was not confined to certain groups among the Black community in South Africa; rather it was an activity to include all the black population of this country. The African Independent Churches (AIC) were part of their agenda. Three major AIC popular associations were, significantly, mentioned, they are the African Independent Churches Associations (AICA), Reformed Independent Churches Association (RICA) and the Assembly of the Zionitic and Apostolic Association (AZASA).

The abovementioned associations form the foundation for the development of the AIC's involvement in social issues. They are also the area in which Black Theology has rubbed shoulders with the AIC on the burning social issues affecting blacks in South Africa. Perhaps it could be argued that before 1976 the pace of development among Blacks was not as fast as it was expected.

By 1976 the rift between the ANC, the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) had weakened significant comprehensive development among the Blacks, although they all fought for the liberation struggle in South Africa. The effects of the squabbles among these organisations did not leave the religious group unaffected. While the Black Church was attempting to unite, outside the Church political organisations remained watertight in their ideologies. They did not become divided constitutionally alone, but physically as well. There was often friction among these organisations; only a fragile tolerance kept them existing in the same areas, and sometimes bloody fights resulted among the members, often including some of their leaders. These divisions had significant implications for social development which may never be overcome in the near future.

It will always starve South African Black Theology of continuity if the waves of the 1976 uprisings are seen as the foundation of Black Theology in South Africa. It also damages the image of a Black person for that matter, simply because it cuts the problem in the two as if the struggle

for Black Liberation was short lived in this country. There were unpopular sources reflecting significant traces of early Black Theology in South Africa. These sources were stifled by the restrictions of the apartheid regime of that time. Yet these origins have to be closely analysed in the light of the topic of this dissertation, as I am of the opinion that they have an important role to play in the debate between AICs and Black Theology.

The Wilgespruit consultation (as indicated on p. 46) was helpful in that it gave a summary of the events and position taken by conferences which formed the basis of building the content of Black Theology. Some of the important advocates are Motlhabi, Buti Tlhagale and Sister Bernard, all coming from the Roman Catholic tradition, while Goba is a Presbyterian, and Maimela a Lutheran. These theologians all come from progressive churches.

They have presented vital papers on history, labour, the impact of Black Consciousness, current themes and women, all in Black Theology. These issues were helpful in mapping the direction in which Black Theology will be pointing. It was a time when apart from the political organisations being involved in the same struggle for liberation, the divisions were inevitable. The Black Consciousness Movement and the progressive “democrats” seemed to have been at loggerheads, and even on inter play between the class and race models, or the combination of those models, in trying to understand the South African Society.

It seems that the really decisive matter was the attitude of these groupings to the historic liberation movements banned in the early sixties: The African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC). The question was whether one should propagate one over against the other or both. It could again be asked whether the Black Consciousness Movement was formed to replace the banned and exiled organisations, or only to play a mobilizing role internally in the face of the vacuum created by the banning in 1960. This burning problem was never discussed. One therefore sees a clear line developing from the origins of Black Theology and in IDAMASA to the present situation. One sees the roots of alienation between Black Theology and the AICs. In the light of these realities, a very important question needs to be asked, to which I now turn my attention.

2.8 CAN BLACK THEOLOGY CLAIM MONOPOLY IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE LIBERATION OF THE OPPRESSED?

The debate between AICs and Black Theology is often complicated by the seemingly exclusive claims of Black Theology in relation to the liberation struggle in South Africa. If an adequate debate is to develop, one will have to address this question: can Black Theology indeed survive being exclusive? Black Theologians such as Ntintili (1996:13) show no compromise in their support of Black Theology. To him there is no question of underestimating the contribution of this theology.

Black Theology has concrete experience of the oppressed Black people (including AICs) as its departure point. Also it had, according to Ntintili, corrected the abstractionism of traditional or an academic theology *but not to the fullest as it is still limited to academic quarters and has not yet implemented itself meaningfully in Black society at the moment* (italics mine). To him Academic Theology tended to be more philosophical in orientation and concerned itself, almost exclusively, with metaphysical issues. Again this it is an admirable observation by Ntintili but it needs substance to prove the cutting edge where Black Theology has dissociated itself from its exclusivity. However, this comment by Ntintili has a drive towards a fresh review of a relevant Black Theology: one that is capable of addressing the black people's social, political or economic crisis while it echoes the voice from God, to maintain its Christian status.

Black Theology has also corrected the dichotomizing tendency of Traditional Theology. Ntintili did not specify what he was referring to by traditional theology; however he might be pointing to western colonial Christianity as it came to Africa. Black Theology does not again, according to him, divide life into sacred and secular spheres. He says (1996:13) that:

All life is sacred because Christ's lordship is all pervasive and thus nothing falls outside the purview of the Gospel. It upholds the unity of life and the impossibility and ludicrousness of separating life into discrete compartments. What happens in one sphere inevitably affect what happens in others.

Finally he indicated that this theology is committed to the transformation of oppressive conditions. It is not engaged in the analysis of oppression purely for academic reasons. In its expression its intent is to transform oppressive conditions. It is committed to the liberation of the oppressed. The Black Solidarity Materialist strand is taken as the most liberative. Maluleke (1996:19) stated by way of challenge that “Black Theology and other Liberation theologies recognised that the Christian church has probably been one of the most powerful instruments in making possible the political oppression of Black people. It remains to be seen according to Mofokeng (1983:34) whether the church in particular, and religion in general, will continue blessing 'the well-known partnership between the gun and the Bible’”.

The statement above by Mofokeng is a clear challenge and a reflection of the status of assurance from the Black Theology perspective. If it had not been through Black Theology (or Black Consciousness), which religion or a black person could have made it in terms of the struggle? The names of the foremost Black Theologians, especially those who are interested in bringing the AICs to the fore, will be focussed on to keep the discussion centred.

Maluleke has shown interest in a dialogue between Black Theology and the AICs. Along side him was Mosala, who even wrote articles about the significant development of the AICs as a church which has shown the signs of being purely African. Mofokeng is adamant in viewing AICs as something other than the genuine church. Tlhagale, though, was of the strong feeling that Black Theology would not last long, as was Motlhabi both have rather opted in favour of African Theology.

Interestingly these Black Theologians are all strong members of the mainline church branches which are pro western in thinking. However, unlike in the seventies and early eighties signs of concern are beginning to show and this to me is the beginning of the significant phase to decide the future of Black Theology in South Africa. The AICs are fast-growing churches in South Africa and the significance of this cannot be ignored. Motlhabi has already indicated the lines which hamper the connection between Black Theology and the AICs.

In Moore (1973:78) Black Theology does not advocate schism from traditional churches, nor is it a theology of theory, neither does it absolutise itself. This statement seems accurate, but could be misleading in some instances. What does he mean by emphasis in action? Does it mean actions in the uncontrolled activities of the comrades as we have experienced them during the 1976 to 86 uprising in South Africa? The other problem of Black Theology will be its followers. There are misleading perceptions that only Black Theologians and some interested or curious White theologians are active participants in this theology.

Black Theology is taken into the community only when it is serving the denominations which are followers of its leaders. The Uniting Reformed Churches for example, of which Allan Boesak was the leader, became popular to the extent that he was appointed the president of World Alliance of the Reformed Churches. He has made an impression on his fellow scholars like Mofokeng and others. Manas Buthelezi and Maimela (both Lutherans), Buti Tlhagale and Motlhabi (both Roman Catholics) also had their own limits in practising Black Theology. These limits were caused by the fact that their religious backgrounds were of a double standard. They belonged to the very colonial churches they were criticising but also baptised in, and providing not only religious world views but also the best choice's of their daily social life style.

Black mission churches did not show much resistance like the AICs members, who did not only rebel against the colonial churches, but also deserted them in the name of what was meaningful to them, their African traditional heritage through which they wanted to understand the gospel. Black Theology (Bediako 1992:394) has its own roots assimilated to those of American experience in many forms. In his lecture on Black Theology at the University of Nairobi Kato indicated that:

Black Theology, however, has human experience as the basic term of reference. Basil Moore concurs that Black Theology is a situational theology. And the situation is that of a Black man in South Africa. Biko in rejecting the absolutes writes, it [Black Theology] grapples with the existential problems and does not claim to be the theology of absolutes. It seeks to bring back God to the black man and to the truth and reality of his situation. Pityana says that Blackness gives a

point of reference, an identity and consciousness.

In the light of Bediako's conviction it is clear that Black Theology has the substance to continue existing. It is actually only running short of brave theologians who will carry it to its logical conclusion and set a standard of promise to Blacks. Maluleke therefore is also of the opinion that this theology should be given a chance and be helped to develop as it carries value to help develop and reorganise the life of a Black person in South Africa.

Motlhabi (in Moore 1973:78-79) gave his personal view as follows:

"Black Theology is thus theology from the viewpoint of the suffering, just as Barth wrote from a Lutheran and German viewpoint or Schillebeeckx from a Roman Catholic viewpoint. So if the real meaning of "black" in this case is suffering, why then not call a spade a spade? To him what matters is not the word black as such rather the meaning of Black Theology as the theology of liberation standing for suffering".

According to Motlhabi again (in Moore 1973:78) Black Theology bears the concern of every Christian for the spread of the gospel, the reorientation and rehabilitation of the people of God. It is therefore not denominational, in the sense of being advocated by a particular church creed, nor does it advocate a schism from traditional churches. It is only concerned with adopting the most and perhaps the only realistic way of spreading the gospel for the benefit of the individual and society, realising the uniqueness of every situation. Thus the Transvaal Regional Seminar on Black Theology (in Hammanskraal, 1971) resolved that it is not a theology of absolutes but grapples with the existential situation. Black Theology is not supposed to be a theology of theory, but one of action and development. It is not reaction against anything (except irrelevancy) but is an authentic and positive articulating of our reflection on God in the light of our Black experience.

The resolution concludes: *As a consequence we turn our backs on the biased interpretation of the Christian message which White dominated churches has been feeding to the black people. We understand Christ's liberation to be liberation not only from circumstances of external*

bondage but also a liberation from circumstances of internal enslavement.

The indent above suggests the open end of Black Theology itself. In order to enter into a meaningful debate with the AICs there should be a significant basis for such argument. The significant overlaps should be identified to formulate the substance for the debate. There has been a narrow viewing of the AICs, especially from the perspective of the significant religious personalities in South Africa. The word “personality” means the involvement of both political and religious political leaders in the struggle under which Black Theologians were comfortable to be classified. It is interesting that during the heights of apartheid AICs were not regularly found in the vocabulary of most of the Black Theologians although they were mentioned as “less significant”. The most common reason to narrow the AIC input was the fact that already Black Theological personalities viewed themselves only as the champions of the entire grassroots communities in South Africa.

It was only during the climax of the struggle in South Africa that we saw Black Theological leaders listening to and also attempting to involve the AICs. What was interesting was whether the AICs about their being positioned in the struggle. What also became major concern for the AICs was the way in which they were used to legitimise the mainline theologians’ interests and ideological gains.

2.9 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

It is clear that before very long a debate between the AICs and Black Theology will demand the inclusion of the Black mainline churches as well. This will help to review the historical discrepancies and malpractices which have resulted in the negative areas through which churches are supporting or suppressing the essence of their calling, consciously or not. The secession issue was a pain in the neck for the powerful Black Theologians, for the simple reason that it contained essential debatable issues which demanded their active participation, as well as building an environment of a theology of the Black context. The fact that the AICs have laid down such a foundation is embarrassing to Black scholars, including Black Theologians, the nettle needs to be grasped firmly now. This chapter has indicated sufficient historical overlaps, and in the next chapter, I indicate the areas which in my view are most promising.

CHAPTER 3

THE IMPACT OF THE AICs IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Kofi Asare Okupu (in Martey 1993:76) has argued that African Independent Churches have succeeded in stripping Christianity of its foreignness, which has been a great handicap and has shown that Christianity can be expressed and meaningfully informed by the African religio-cultural reality. The theological potentiality of the African Independent Churches (AICs) is acclaimed by inculturation and liberationists alike; however key theologians from both schools of thought have not seriously engaged the study of the movement, as they have of the ATR²³. This is true in South Africa as well.

Also, it could be argued that apart from the AIC's successes (1993:77) they have not escaped the scholarly criticism and derogatory remarks from some anthropologists and sociologists who have associated them with theological "heresies", "syncretisms"²⁴ and "Satanism". Among African Theologians, there is an observable tension between inculturationists and liberationists about the perception of the AICs. Whereas the old guard of African Theology (Josiah Young in Martey 1993:77) tended to correct what they perceived to be primitive and problematic syncretism in the African Independent Churches, the new guard asserts that these churches are the hope of African Theology.

The abrupt interference of some of the South African Black theologians raises a great deal of concern when dealing with the AICs. Their scholastic influences, particularly with a mainline background, could give the false picture that their own thinking patterns are a better framework

²³In support of this Martey (:76) cited that to Mveng these churches are a theological locus; to Goba they are a point of departure for Black Theology; for Fashole Luke they should be brought to the theological focus since their innovative insight will not merely contribute to the development of African Theology but also prevent it from becoming a sterile academic exercise divorced from the life situation of Africa and from becoming a product only fit for Western consumption.

²⁴Syncretistic as indicated by Lukhaimane (1980:40): that among the ZCC for example it is a combination of tradition, customs and values with European aspects to form a completely different type of Christianity. However, the use of other terms like "heresies" and "satanic" could be misleading if unsupported.

for seeking cooperation with the AICs. Their perceived arguments for supporting the AICs could easily dictate to and fracture the content of AIC theological perceptions. A dictatorship could be created by insisting that AIC theology be viewed in terms of their radical religious, and socioeconomic, perspective. If this approach by scholars of Black Theology is left unchallenged, it could easily create an unresolved situation between these two theological trends.

The Bullhoek (Ntabelanga) Massacre and the Bambata rebellion will be introduced by way of discussion in this section only to reflect a positive historical engagement as a crucial contribution by the AICs to the South African political struggle. The two rebellions reflect similar outcomes to the Soweto uprisings of 1976 although the two rebellions were much smaller. Just as the contribution of Black Theology and the South African Council of Churches (SACC) to the liberation struggle were remarkable, so were the two rebellions. This similarity can therefore, in my view, serve as a historical starting point for debate.

The full stories of both Bullhoek and Bambata can be read from the relevant sources, as indicated in the list of references. The main concern in this chapter is to reflect on significant contributions made by AICs not only to “spiritual issues”, as is usually emphasised especially by Black theologians, but also to the struggle against both colonialism and apartheid. If we follow this perspective, we should be able to promote a more fruitful debate between the AICs and Black theologians.

It is very important that the AICs should not always be seen as beggars²⁵ or opportunists, rather than being instrumental in alleviating the poverty in which they are often trapped. The gaining of democracy in South Africa offered every citizen the opportunity to decide whether one wanted to be progressive or retrogressive in terms of development. The engagements of AICs in opportunities such as ‘capacity building’²⁶ projects, environmental caring projects and the

²⁵As “beggars” since mostly the grassroots communities are viewed to be on the receiving end, without making any effort to help themselves. Nowadays democratic activities, such as RDP and Masakhane community capacity building projects, encourage communities to do things by themselves.

²⁶A capacity building project refers to self-sustainable projects through people’s efforts. They work as powerful units to achieve good results. The projects are owned and managed by the people or communities themselves. AICs play a crucial role in this regard with their large following from the poor communities as well.

opportunity to affiliate to the global ecumenical movement²⁷ created hope amongst these churches. In the end they will be capable of empowering themselves in such a way that they can do things for themselves in spite of their limited resources.

3.2 THE BULLHOEK / NTABELANGA MASSACRE

Tabelanga is preferred by Jafta (1997:32) to the name BuLlhoek perhaps because it sounds more traditional than the latter. According to the East London Daily Dispatch newspaper Ntabelanga is also known as the Mount of the Rising Sun²⁸. This name was preferred by the community which was involved in the massacre at Bullhoek. Passover annual celebrations were occasionally held in the Tabernacle of the Israelites in the area.

The Ntabelanga community was Christian in its entirety, and they belonged to various groups of the AICs. Enoch Mgiijima seceded from the Wesleyan Church and joined the Israelites²⁹. The tragedy which resulted in Ntabelanga portrayed a picture of self determination and self identity among the Israelites who, apart from being an AIC felt that God was on their side. There were many views and interpretations of the massacre afterwards. Among others was the response of the commissioner of Queenstown himself who wanted to justify the act of the regiment by indicating that the Bullhoek Massacre, Originated in a poor understanding of a Christian Religious group, which intended to get rid of the White man (see Lea 1926:13, chapter 2, p 9).

²⁷ It is important for the AICs to be part of the global church. The OAIC is a good example to this effect.

²⁸ Ntaba means mountain and Langa means sun therefore Ntabelanga could also be translated as the Mountain of the Rising Sun. This was the mountain in close proximity to Ntabelanga village, on which shadows and sunlight alternate (The East London Daily Dispatch [sl.] :3).

²⁹ According to the Native Affairs Commission ([sl.]:3) John J Msikinya, a native of Fort Beaufort, during a visit to America became a follower of a Black (Negro) American named Crowdy, the founder of the religious organisation known as the Church of Saints of Christ. Msikinya returned to South Africa as a bishop of the organisation and established himself at the Uitenhage location. It is stated that womenfolk were captured by its baptism procedure of total immersion at midnight, its kiss of peace, its Sabbath day. Younger men were impressed by the fact that blacks were led by a prophet and as a result they were God's chosen ones. Mgiijima became the bishop after the death of Msikinya in 1914. The name Israel (Hammond-Tooke 1974:419) originates from the Negro Baptist Church of God and the Saints of Christ in America.

The government saw the cause of the clash as a clear case of illegal occupation of land; the Israelites were seen as contravening a location (township) 'law' which regulated the number of huts allowed to be built on one stand. To the Israelites, the decision not to leave was a religious one. The correct practice of their religion and the attendant worship of God required that they stay in that particular community. The perception by the Israelites that the government was impinging on their religious freedom is clearly reflected, for example, in the inscription on the mass grave of Israelites killed in the resulting clash: "Because they chose the plan of God so the world did not have place for them" (see Edger 1988, cf also Mofokeng 1991 in Saayman 1993:40).

If we carefully look into the way the Israelites and their sympathisers viewed the massacre, it can be easily deduced that they stood their ground for wanting to acquire land in the country of their forefathers. This stems from the fact that Mgijima's groups in the Cape were mainly members of the Fingo tribe which were actually viewed as wanderers and beggars.³⁰ Secondly they have also stood as a movement for their positive image. In solidarity with God, as they were convinced, they refused to leave³¹ the premises as the commissioner had ordered, even though the drama eventually ended up in crisis.

It is well summarised by Saayman (see Edgar 1988:1 in Saayman1993:40) that the Israelites believed the end of the world to be near and they refused to leave their holy village of Ntabelanga. But the government would not overlook a challenge of that nature. It claimed that the Israelites were illegally squatting on land, and it sent out the police to force the Israelites to leave. In the end many people were killed; perhaps to some surviving Israelites this event became a fulfilment of a prophecy in a Book of Revelation that if the world ended many would rapture while others will remain.

³⁰According to Jafta (1996:37), historically the Fingos (the original tribe of Mgijima) were fugitives from the Hlubi tribe. They fled from Natal during the Shaka wars, across the Tugela river into the Eastern Cape. Because of their history as fugitives they were soft targets for the missionaries in the Cape. They also had a reputation as beggars.

³¹The Ntabelanga community was subjected to the Native Location Act no 37 of 1884, which prohibited the squatting on, building on, or damaging the commonage.

3.3 THE BAMBATA REBELLION

This story could be viewed in more than one way, firstly that Bambata was a nuisance to the Whites since he was not cooperative with the authorities in many respects. Secondly, interestingly enough, is the role of Christians in the rebellion itself. Although the emphasis was on the evil things Bambata himself did, Stuart (1913:420) emphasised that the Christian native participation in the insurrection was prominent. What could have been the reason?

The coalition Government under C J Smythe's leadership (Smail 1971:150) in Natal, confronted by an embarrassing budget deficiency, passed a Poll Tax Act in August 1905. This state of affairs was not acceptable to the Africans in Natal. However, the outcomes of the Zulu War of 1879, the Anglo Boer War of 1899-1902, the locust invasions and the rinderpest, the innumerable hardships which also included the great loss of life when the East Coast Fever swept through the country, were still fresh in the minds of many Zulus in Natal, including the Black Christians where many belonged to the AIC community.

Stuart (1913:421) indicated that native preachers were involved and that their preaching was seditious. Graytown was actually where events took place; Bambata was a chief in a nearby village. He indicated that preaching includes statements such as: "The end of the age is at hand. On the Black race did God originally bestow the right of governing. Now the time is drawing to a close. Authority will be conferred on the black race. The right to govern is reverting to its original possessor, and they will now be exalted to a position above the Whites. You shall enjoy complete ascendancy over Europeans for the power has at length been restored to you by the Almighty. Even where actual conflicts occur between you and whites, you will surely scare them away, for God is standing on your side".

The actual impression created was not necessarily the sharing of power, rather a total takeover to regain the authority of what they regarded as their natural heritage. The land issue and heavy taxes revealed the pressure under which the natives found themselves, also from intolerance, mainly from the Europeans. In fact they were justified in expressing their dissatisfaction on issues which had threatened their lives. It is clear that the group which Stuart (1913:420-21) is referring to is the AICs, mainly members of the Ethiopian group. The services were usually held in remote

and secret areas outside the hearing of the authorities. Also, it is stated that many of the Christian natives who rebelled were not attached to the any recognised missionary body. Stuart again summarises as follows:

When the actual hostilities broke out, many of these men (preachers) were determined to practice what they had preached. They accordingly broke away from the mission stations, notably in Mapumulo, Ndwandwe and Umsinga divisions and joined the rebels.

It is illuminating to briefly compare these two events with later events which are important sources for Black Theology. In 1976, groups of militant students started the uprisings which spread into schools and eventually affected the entire country. Churches and parents became part of the revolt in support of their children and for change in South Africa. Black Theology traced its roots from that event. Prominent Church leaders took active roles in the struggle³². The AICs likewise were actively involved even though they did not have a strong voice as the mainline groups had already claimed it due to factors including popularity, education and financial resources among others. They were part of the exploited, and vulnerable to cruel treatment from the “comrades”³³ and the police force.

The difference between the 1976 uprising and the Bambata Rebellion, especially in a religious sense, is that mainline Churches, including Black Theologians, were in the forefront of the struggle in terms of “command”³⁴ while the Bambata treated Missionary Churches with suspicion (as if missionary churches were not affected by heavy taxation as well). They were suspected of being supportive of the Government. It should be kept in mind that it was a time when Blacks felt that they could still easily regain power militantly from the ruling government.

³²They provided venues for secret meetings by different political organisations, they also acted as homes for those who were threatened with death either by neck lacing or by the cruel acts of the police in those days.

³³Although the word comrade was used by the freedom fighters, often it did not carry its proper use. The hooligans who saw the unrest as an opportunity to carry out their own wishes, also used it.

³⁴They became spoke persons for the voiceless communities, and they also determined the direction in which the struggle was supposed to go.

In 1907 of the Native prisoners in Natal about 418 were Christians. Out of this number about 204 were convicted as ordinary criminals while 214 had been convicted of rebellion according to Stuart (1913:421), seven from the latter number were preachers. Thus, the AICs formed part of the struggle for justice in South Africa since active colonial times to the present. This again is very similar to the numbers of leading Christians and ministers detained since after 1976.

It could be concluded that the Bullhoek Massacre and the Bambata rebellion signalled the imperative commitment of the African Church within the AICs engaging in the struggle for both liberation and the struggle for justice not only for church members, but for the whole Black community. How much could the Church be involved without being part of the suffering people it represents? This information highlights the fact that AICs are not merely historical but also part of the everyday struggle to survive against manipulative middle and upper class societies across the social racial spectrum, in South Africa in particular. In other words: for both AICs and Black theologians the struggle for political and economic justice is a formative event in their self-understanding. This confirms the urgent need for serious theological debate between the two groups.

3.4 AICs AND THE SACC

In this section the history of the SACC is not necessarily the focus, rather the actual interaction with the AIC organisations. The SACC founded in 1968 became a forceful organisation, representative of various church denominations throughout South Africa including the AICs. Nash (1980:3-4) puts it that:

By contrast with the annual gathering of major denominational bodies the SACC national conference is overwhelmingly black. Why? Particularly because many of the member bodies are Black (NGKA, Broerderkring, AICA, SCM)...

At least one of the AICs organisations in the shape of AICA, was represented in the SACC. It should also be kept in mind that AICA had been an official member of the Christian Institute of South Africa since 1964. The relationship with the Institute was emphatically for educational reasons more than anything else. The SACC (Mogashoa 1999:113) became popular when the

South African apartheid government banned liberation movements and suppressed a number of church organisations; as a result the SACC transformed itself from within. This was through John Rees, secretary general from 1970, who made it his priority to bring more blacks into the leadership and participation in the affairs of SACC.

Nash (1985:151) indicated that particularly since 1976, the SACC general secretary was seen by the needy (and the covetous) as a source or means of access to all manners of benefits. The benefits ranged from bursaries for rural school children and other education assistance, legal aid, maintenance of dependents of political prisoners, publicity and intervention in cases of threatened removals, to opportunities for overseas theological study and conference travel, and grants for relief and development projects undertaken by local churches and community groups. Nash, however, above all emphasised that the SACC was not a welfare body.

The above-mentioned paragraph suggests that the AICs were no exceptions to the resources provided by the SACC. Rev. Paul Makhubu became a member of the executive committee of the SACC, also the representative of the AICs. The visible relationship between the SACC and the involvement of the AICs became clearer during the conflict between the general secretary of the SACC and Anglican Church Bishop Desmond Tutu with Bishop Isaac Mokwena, former chairman of the South African Theological College for Independent Churches,³⁵ and the president of the Reformed Independent Churches Association (Rica).

Bishop Mokwena was opposed by the Council of African Independent Churches (CAIC) for his claim that he was a lifetime president of the Reformed Independent Churches Association (RICA). He was also taken to a task for his claim that he had a following of more than 4,5 million.³⁶ The general secretary of CAIC, Rev P Makhubu, dissociated himself from the allegations made by Mokwena during SABC TV interview. He indicated that Rica was a former affiliate of CAIC, the umbrella body uniting the bulk of South Africa's independent African church movements. Mokwena was the former director for church development of the South African Council of

³⁵ Citizen 22/ 2/1980.

³⁶Sowetan, Wednesday, December 19, 1984 page 5.

Churches³⁷. It is important to highlight that this misunderstanding created a favourable situation for AICA with the SACC over against RICA.

This relationship became vital since Makhubu was able to get advice from SACC to effectively manage CAIC. Alongside him was Bishop Ntongana his deputy. Makhubu was also the rector of Khanya Institute for African Independent Churches (KAIC). The significant inclusion of the AICs in SACC became imperative, to signal the vitality of the support needed by the grassroots communities. They would be more effectively known by higher Church bodies in South Africa and internationally. The AICs gained even more support when Rev Chikane became the General Secretary of SACC. Already he had worked with them at the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) in Braamfontein. The book AICs Speaking for Ourselves was published through his help as the then head of ICT. SACC, like most of the other political organisations in the country, saw the AICs as a potential link with its partners.

3.5 AICs AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Khoapa (1972:32) indicated that since 1964 the AICs were concerned about their educational future. They then approached the Christian Institute of Southern Africa for advice and guidance in the field of theological training for their ministers. There were several projects undertaken since 1964 for educational³⁸ training. The Association of South African Theological Institutes (ASATI) was responsible for examinations and the issuing of certificates to all member churches affiliated to ASATI.

AICA Theological Seminary became the extension of the Correspondence course initiative. It was situated in Alice in the Cape. It was administered under the Theological Educational Committee which was elected by the AICA conference. In 1969 a small group broke away from AICA to form the Reformed Churches Association (RICA) which was funded by the Dutch reformed

³⁷Citizen 28/07/1979.

³⁸They introduced a correspondence course to give theological tutelage to the various ministers in charge of the independent churches. The course dealt with Biblical principles and the message from of the scriptures. The principal of the college was Rev. Maqina who was the president of the Association as well. The student fees were only R20 per year as subsidies were coming from donations from Churches in Germany, Holland and Switzerland.

Church, the RICA theological educational project seems to have been administratively assisted by the then department of Bantu education.

The Khanya Theological Institute for the AIC was the latest attempt at educational development among the AICs. It also went down the drain when Rev Makhubu died. The reason for its downfall was basically the bureaucratic³⁹ running of the College. The only remaining semi active correspondence theological school for the AIC at the moment is the African Spiritual Churches Association (ASCA) under the leadership of Bishop Ngada and Rev Kenosi Mofokeng. There is therefore a strong need for support to assist the AICs to reorganise their theological educational college. It is imperative that they need assistance in this regard. For both AICs and Black Theology to come closer to each other, this aspect could be one, among others, which could be profitably attended to.

When the Christian Institute was banned in 1977, Bishop Ngada and Rev Makhubu members of the AICs who were part of the negotiations for another college. SATCIC was opened at St. Ansgars⁴⁰ (ICT 1985:8). The major reason was the lack of funds. The correspondence course was taken over by Theological Training by Extension College (TEEC). Both colleges, Makhubu and Ngada, used TEEC material all the time. Khanya was using a rented building in Johannesburg from which all its educational and administrative valuables was repossessed while Arch bishop Ntongana was heading the college. It is indeed back to square one that the AICs have no legitimate Educational Training Centre of their own. This seems to be a fruitful area of cooperation between Black Theology and AICs.

Other AIC groups, like the St. John's, have built a Theological College of their own. The school was built at the headquarters of ST John's AFM in Evaton. The local ministers acquired their theological training from this college. It could be expected that the ZCCs had their own theological College but this was not the case. However they have built two schools, a primary and a secondary school by the name of Marobathota, on the Eastern side of Moria, the ZCC headquarters. These schools are officially registered with the Department of Education and

³⁹Information, especially finance, was never disclosed to colleagues by Reb Makhubu.

⁴⁰St Ansgars- after a great deal of controversies the seminary was closed.

Training in South Africa.

Bishop Lekhanyane of the ZCC acquired his theological training through Stofberg Theological Seminary⁴¹ at the University of the North in Pietersburg. Most of the members of the church are appointed as ministers through experience and spiritual gifts including healing and prophecies. Education is mainly achieved through their own effort. Like in the ZCC which has large numbers of the disadvantaged following, the efforts by the AICs in educational matters incorporate large number of the members of the same ZCC as well.

The struggle for leadership and meagre funds among the AICs was, and still is, the keys to frustrations among these groups. The lack of resources has torn the good image of the AICs apart. Most of the positive attempts made towards the development of theological education were interrupted negatively⁴² from time to time. Although the AICs in South Africa are members of the Organisation of African Independent Churches in Africa (OAIC) with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, this did not bring much change in terms of reducing poverty and suffering.

3.6 AICs AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

AICs have for many years been connected to the real struggle of the grassroots in South Africa. They form an important component of the agenda for social analysis of the marginalised. It was already indicated in the previous pages that the AICs are not confined inside buildings: rather they are found in public spaces influencing the agenda of transformation for the country's political domain and the spiritual outreach as is mandated in scriptures. They are also the important bearers of African traditional religious characteristics. They formed a transitional⁴³ zone between the western cultural and the African traditional religious experience. The AICs are the acting samples of communal life which others may learn on how living together means. In areas like Zimbabwe

⁴¹The Seminary was a Dutch Reformed property affiliated to University of the North, although now is belonging to the uniting Reformed Churches of South Africa.

⁴²Lack of comprehensive mindedness and lack of training skills in running institutions created crisis which later resulted into failure of all efforts to organise legitimate theological educational centres.

⁴³'Transitional' is mainly used to remind the readers that Christianity came through the western moulds and remains in the same format for a long time.

they are known to have had strong relationship with the freedom fighters⁴⁴. They were helping them not only with prayers, but also with food and hiding places during the war.

The AICs to Battle (1984:8) are also known to have attracted many followers among the uneducated, oppressed and marginal classes of African society. Because these churches have always been intimate touch to the needs and frustrations of the disadvantaged and dispossessed, they have been able to develop relevant types of Christian communities and a new form of liturgic expression of their faith with body and soul through dancing and singing. Members of these organisations rely strongly on their faith to withstand the forces of evil in the forms of sorceries, sickness and death.

Through them no man is an island, a person can only meaningfully live by relating to others. The idea of comradeship in real sense was used by Black Consciousness movement and other political organisations to appeal for unity against apartheid, it was the same among the AICs who used the word “bazalwane”⁴⁵. Other slogan such as “an injury to one is an injury to all” depicts unity among political groups often are used among the AIC groups and perhaps other Churches to show commitment towards unity.

3.6.1. Community development Projects

The AICs should be seen progressively in the light of total economic and structural development of the entire South Africa. Problems, of joblessness, sickness, homelessness, poverty and epidemics affects them as well. The major problem the communities are facing is the lack of relevant resources, including funds to starts projects, however through the little income in the forms of donations some interesting community projects are in place.

⁴⁴The information came from an unrecorded conversation on June 1998 with Prof Daneel at Unisa about the role the Zimbabwean AICs have played during the struggle for liberation in that country.

⁴⁵The Zulu words “bazalwane” and “anaqabane” carry the same meaning as comrade. Both words expresses the fellows in work or members of the same organisation.

The government initiatives such as Masakhane (building together as a nation) and Reconstruction and Development Programmes (RDP) were intended to boost the disadvantaged groups including the AICs. Some of the AIC has utilised the opportunity effectively and benefited from such offers from the government. In Atteridgeville Tirelo Setshaba Community Project for example became outstanding as a support group dominated by the grassroots members including the AIC bishops and ministers, to initiate self-help schemes creating jobs to many members of the disadvantaged community in Atteridgeville. Its self methods create opportunity that includes small farming, crafting, recycling, cleaning operations, feeding schemes and creches among others are outstanding.

As a result of what is stated above, more AIC bishops and ministers have decided to support the project on permanent basis and it is also attracting other community members and more AICs to join this project. They therefore easily interact with the community they are ministering. Many people are buying their vegetable products at low prices. There are annual celebrations⁴⁶ helping the project members to create a stronger bond and live together as a community. Such similar projects have been developed in other parts of the various provinces⁴⁷ of South Africa. The emphasis should be made that the success of the initiative lies in the mutual cooperation from various stakeholders including companies, NGO's and the government does make a difference for upliftment of the disadvantaged groups of our South African society.

3.6.2 Environmental Issues

The ecological emphasis among the AICs in Zimbabwe through Professor Daneel's initiative remains an outstanding link of the AICs to the environment. The tree planting initiative of the African Instituted Churches in Zimbabwe has become famous throughout the world. Since the formation of the Zimbabwe Institute of Religious Research and Ecological conservation (ZIRRCON) in 1988, churches in the country have been challenged on the basis of their Christian faith to engage in tree planting activities. They also generate income from the same effort while

⁴⁶Tree planting ceremonies and arbor day celebration where outstanding government leaders are invited to address the event. Often schools are involved to reach out to the youth as well.

⁴⁷Kgothlang Community project in Rust De Winter in the border of Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Northern Province is one other development, the Soshanguve Urban Project, and the Modimong environmental project in Northwest are few among many which are already running throughout the country.

annual ceremonies are held towards this event.

In South Africa Faith and Earthkeeping Project was founded by David Olivier at Unisa, his project's main objective was to conscientise people about the value of caring for the environment. Nurseries, recycling of paper and litter, permaculture and vegetable gardens were some of the methods used to engage the church communities in environmental caring operations. Since many of the AIC prophets and prophetesses, ministers and bishops are actively engaged in healing activity which involved the harvesting of different kinds of herbs, they have been taught other methods to replenish the species harvested. They are taught a take and replace techniques⁴⁸. The AICs participation in celebrations of Arbor Day annual creates awareness of how vital the trees are human beings.

3.6.3 Missiological Contributions

African Independent Churches should no longer be considered as “sects” or “separatist” movement of the periphery of Christianity. On the contrary, in terms of recruitment strategies, growth rate and contextualised theology they may be more qualified as “mainline” Churches in the African context. The statistics (Daneel [sl.]:8) show that about 50% of the South African Black population belongs to the AICs. And a current growth rate is significantly surpassing those older “historical or “mission” churches. This in itself calls for in-depth research and ecumenical interaction.

AICs do not necessarily depict an inactive autonomous existing movement, but are strongly appealing for the cognisance of their culture and tradition against the foreign intolerances and misunderstanding of people from other cultures. They portray a picture which creates consciousness towards African roots as part of God's mandated act as well in Africa. This protest against intolerance is appealing for justice against colonial missionary imperialism.

⁴⁸This is done through developing of nurseries where the traditional herbs and grasses could be reproduced to be planted back to their original habitat areas. They could be as well sold to generate income for the projects.

Bosch emphasised the many dimensions of mission in expounding 'Missio Dei' as also including the appeal to images, metaphors, events, and pictures rather than logical analysis. These are accommodating experiences of church practices portrayed among the AIC groups. He gave six salvific events which, according to him, indicate the direction of what mission is all about and which are extracted from the New Testament: incarnation of Christ, his death on the cross, his resurrection on the third day, his ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the parousia (Bosch1991:512). The only visible difference between the AICs and the Mainline Churches towards these will be on the different techniques and methods of celebration⁴⁹.

The AICs technically speaking are celebrating the salvific events through means of their traditional experiences and context. One significant factor is that AIC members see themselves as in 'toto African'⁵⁰. When their Christianity is questioned at the expense of their African traditional outlook, it becomes confusing since they cannot be something else than what they presently are. They regard themselves as Christians and no one should oppose that without giving them satisfactory alternatives which are other than the colonial ones. As a result they resort to live the way reality and Christianity is meaningful to them.

The other significant contribution is that they form a significant part of ecumenical movement with the emphasis on the role of the marginalised communities. This is one of the central points of the World Council of Churches (WCC) missionary calling to all nations of the world. The emphasis on peace, love and "justice" is reflected in "kgotsong", the popular greeting among the ZCCs with the response "a ye ate!" meaning that peace must reign all the time among the people.

⁴⁹If the practical theological concept of constants and variables in the scriptures works, it even fits the activity of the AICs well in that their deeper Christian feeling is based on the way they sing and dance for their Lord. There is an outstanding feeling which no one from outside the practice of their theology can explain.

⁵⁰African 'in toto' (see also option mentioned by Lukhaimane 1980:40) indicates that no person can be defined apart from his social, cultural or traditional values as that will distort and reflect incompleteness to that person. It is only through the eye of the West that AICs may appear somehow funny because they do not buy into the European way of viewing things, let alone the way to determine what makes a person a qualified Christian.

It is fair to state that AICs are forming a significant part of Missiological block in that firstly they are Christian, they regard the Bible as the Word of God and see themselves as the community of believers. They also observe the Easter event that Jesus Christ died for their sins on the Cross, even though some may argue that the emphasis is more in the Old Testament which qualifies them to be half Christian. This could only be shelved for the AICs and the Mainlines doctrinal debate to determine the better answers.

3.6.4 The “Three Selves”

The concept of “Three Selves” (Saayman 1996:30) was expressed by Henry Venn (an Anglican, secretary of Church missionary Society from 1841 to 1872) and Rufus Anderson (an American Congregationalist, secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission from 1832 to 1866). This concept expressed the establishment of Self-Governing, Self-Supporting, and Self-Propagating. This concept became useful to many young developing churches in the mission field for autonomous reasons from the mother bodies.

Although the AICs have no links with the Western churches and are receiving no overseas assistance, they are shaped around what is known as the “Three Self Formulas” (Self - Governing, Self-Support, Self Proper - gating ⁵¹). They do what has for a long time been the goal of missionary policy of many mission boards. Another characteristic of AICs according to Battle (1984:2) is the adaptation of various cultural elements into their theologies and ceremonies, meaning that their theologies are rooted in the context of their real life experiences.

It should not be confusing that emphasis of three selves automatically denote that the AICs are complete in terms material possessions for a normal living. They form part of the poor community, however, they beside of that continue to live within that state of conditions. The strong emphasis on them is merely to reflect on what they are doing, what they have achieved in life, what is

⁵¹Perhaps the concept of three selves (Krtzinger et al. 1984:156) should be looked into as the ideals of the young Church. It was a natural transition from where the concept of “independent Church” has originated. Missionary work must be done in such a way that new converts are gradually led to independence- the missionary must work with the view of withdrawing the mission. The euthanasia of mission is the ultimate objective. In practice, however, nothing came of this. The standards were so high that real independence was never attained. However, the African Independent Churches were able to sought-out themselves from the missionary complexities and negative criticisms to the cultures and traditions.

keeping their lives meaningful and why are they so attractive to both middle and upper class societies in South Africa, particularly Christians.

They are *Self-governing* in the sense that AICs do not belong to any missionary church. Most of these churches were born through secession from the colonial churches, there are also churches which have originated by the prophetic means. The St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission was founded through visions and revelations to prophetess Nku⁵². The same calling has created many following to St. John's. It is true that the church will financially survive through contributions from the members of the church and money contributed as 'thanksgiving' from all those who are thankful for the healing or help they have received from the prophetess.

The church is self governing also because it runs all of its own administration including the appointments of ministers and ordination of bishops their own way. This Church had started St. John's Mission School in 1942 under the principalship of Rev. E Kobeli through the revelation to Mrs Nku. It was built at its Headquarters in Evaton near Vereeniging. The school was registered with the department of then Bantu Education. Qualified teachers registered with the department were employed.

They are *Self-Supportive* in that all financial costs are settled by the church itself without any help from outside. The consultation fee for example from those who were helped from their various problems including sicknesses, and various forms of misfortunes. Some of the members will contribute voluntarily extensive amounts of money or give cattle and goats among others. The same system is prevalent among members of other churches as well. During Easter time for example the ZCC members gather in Moria and amongst others they contribute huge sums of money to the church.

⁵²According to Nku ([Sa]:4) historically there is a connection with the Pentecostal Apostolic Faith Mission Church (AFM) originating from America. The father of Nku's husband Lazarus worked for 45 years in the AFM of South Africa. He died in 1948, his son also Lazarus J Nku was already a bishop. It should be kept in mind that Mother Christina Nku received her Spiritual gift in 1907 while she was only 13 years old. If their third born Lydia was born in 1925 it means they have already lived together many years. It means since the Apostolic Faith Mission is also known as Kereke ya Moya (a Spiritual Church), it will not be amazing to see Bishop Lazarus Nku son of elder Nku member of AFM in South Africa getting married to a young girl spirit filled. Bishop Nku was the leader of St John's until his death in 1949.

ZCCs are presently running the “Bahwaduba” bus transport company which provide jobs to other members of the church. As it is the rule that only members of the ZCC could be employed. The other question is why the Church is not engaging itself in building projects around and in the city of Moria, this is not the question to be answered in this essay, however it should raise a concern. AICs are not only supporting each other financially only, they also help each other morally⁵³ during the times of difficulties including when death had occurred and affected one of their family or church members.

They are *Self-Propagating* in that the word of God is accompanied by actions towards addressing the community problems. People do not become members for the sake of curiosity but because in turn they have been healed from deadly deceases, saved from evil spirits, marriage disputes been successfully addressed, through the prophets’ and prophetesses’ prayers are now employed. They therefore would like to serve the church faithfully to thank God of their forefathers.

What is said in this chapter might and should not be interpreted as boasting on behalf of the AICs. It should raise concern to address a question already posed by Prof Takatso Mofokeng (www.sacc.org.za/news.html) as: “how do the upper class (blacks included) make transformation the basis of the poor and how will again the upper class make the suffering of the poor the basis for transformation?” His answer was that the Black ‘middle and upper’ class stood on the side of the voiceless not as their spokes persons rather as part of those who understand what suffering means.

The impact of the AIC in South African context should not be viewed as a stereotype, but it should be seen as the challenging foundations for African rooted Christianity. It is the basis for the Church which is African in nature. African Independent Churches are not estranged from African traditional religion, they belong together and those who seek to identify themselves as black Africans should seek links with these Churches.

⁵³Morally speaking every human being must receive help if that person is asking for it or even when a person is in heart of troubles of any kind (interview Rev. Makinita of the African Catholic Apostolic Church in Atteridgeville 3 April 1995).

AICs have drawn on the African primordial social world-views which in essence are ‘hereditary’⁵⁴ and could not be divorced from the composition of a total black person. The black elite ministers and theologians have critically suffered in terms of failing to attract reasonable numbers of new converts to their respective churches. The reason is that they have fail to reconcile the critical African life issues with Western Christianity to attain African Theology. The basic needs of voiceless communities are often not well addressed by the Mainline ministers and theologians in a way that satisfied the black targeted groups. Black Theology will fall within the same category of some of the mainline churches who according to Kritzinger et al (1984:18) are mainly “dowers” rather than “being” in their theologising. In contrast AICs are the parts and content of their ministries. They do not just preach but also practice what they preach.

3.7 CONCLUDING SUMMERY

In the next chapter the outcome of what is previously discussed in this thesis including the present discussion will be critically analysed on the basis of a healthy but friendly critical debate. The reason is not to let one side compromise its own stand point at the expense of the other, but it should be a question of understanding the direction to which the debate is taking. This will also help to establish the grounds for a positive evaluation towards the establishment of theology of mutual interest between Black Theology and the AICs themselves. Both are seeking to arrive at a common ground on a format which African Theology will benefit as well, whiles it is not necessary for “them” to become dissolved in it.

⁵⁴“Hereditary” is referring to what Oduyoye (1983:113) have implied that “Africans do have their own ways of looking at life, which at several points part company with the perspectives which prevails in the western societies”. Christianity in Africa has not adequately absorbed or even taken into account the primal world views it encountered.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARDS A CONSTRUCTIVE DEBATE

4.1 Introduction

It is no longer a matter of critical approach but the agenda for that approach which matters most. Black Theology is faced with the most crucial moment of redefining its new theoretical approach. This has been fostered by the incomplete dawn of a new South Africa. It should be kept in mind that the previous agenda of Black Theology was based on the struggle towards ending the apartheid rule.

Now that apartheid system is gone, what meaningful role will Black Theology play for its future survival? The issue of the struggle for justice becomes enormous because of its unlimited boundaries a feminist professor or a female manager, could declare successfully that she has been deprived of her rights. This does happen across racial barriers as some whites could also declare the same. In this case, then, what is the role of Black Theology and its agenda? The discussions in this section will be mainly focussed on a possible future role for Black Theology.

Goba (1988:93-94) also is much concerned about the use of the uncritical theological frame of reference of "the oppressor". Who is the oppressor then, is it whites as before or the new government? If not either then who? The new government declares itself as the government of the people for the people. Then, if this is the case, Black Theology has lost the most vital component of its struggle, which seems to be carried away by the government itself. The other issue which Black Theology was fighting for was the issue of land. The policies on land are functioning, and land redistribution and repatriation are also taking place. Then is there really a space for Black Theology anymore?

It is also clear that in the scope of Black Theology, as perceived by Goba, the AICs become part of the vital element which can help Black Theology to grow. However this notion of regarding the AICs as a vital component has not yet been deliberated on. All that is indicated is that it is necessary to include the AICs in the scope of Black Theology. What is there to be negotiated and in what way can this be done?

On the other hand is there anything which AICs can contribute as their own input in the struggle of blacks in South Africa, apart from Black theological input? Most of the material production of the AICs is centred around seeking the explanation of what role they play in the black society, and how. They have not yet advanced acceptable criteria for making themselves known in the areas, away from their geographic locations.

In seeking avenues towards constructive debates with Black Theology, a *modus operandi* is necessary. What options are there in the present social, political and religious practices? This chapter will focus more on raising questions, hoping that in the end there will be possible answers to further the debate between Black Theology and the AICs. I will attempt to keep a clear focus in my reasoning by arranging my guidelines around four issues which I consider central to the proposed debate: the preferential option for the poor; the priority /primacy of the Black experience; spirituality; and complementarity.

4.1.1 The preferential option for the poor

The basis for the preferential options for the disadvantaged should be viewed, again according to Goba (1988:22), from the base on which both Black Theology and AIC theology are similar. These theologies, like the American theology of the black Church, were confronted by many odds including illiteracy, malnutrition, poverty, and black anger engendered by the destructive policies of separate development. In the end, no matter how powerful the oppressed were in terms of resisting pressure from the oppressors, they often had to pay heavy prices in terms of disadvantages within the South African society of that time.

According to Nash (1980:38) it was not only right but also obligatory for the Black Christians⁵⁵ to demand their material resources. As part of their obedience to God who made them heirs and stewards of his kingdom, Black Christians had to participate in the searching for social, economic and political justice. They had to press towards realising in society those human communal values,

⁵⁵Black Christians as the basic representatives of the Black Church should not in this case be understood as confined to Black Theology; many members of the Black Churches are actively connected to the White mission (mainline) Churches. This is often confusing if one wants clarity concerning those whom Black Theology is representing in South Africa. Traditionally it is taken for granted that it represents all Blacks irrespective of their traditional church affiliations.

including hospitality, generosity and respect for human dignity, of which the word "ubuntu" is the splendid summary. This happened at the time when the churches involved in the liberation struggle in South Africa (mostly affiliated to SACC, the Lutheran Federation and the Uniting Reformed Churches) felt that God was on the side of the oppressed.

Another emphasis on the preferential option for the poor (Johanson 1975:73-75) was stressed in the resolutions taken at the national conference of the SACC in July 1975. The statement on 'Detente', point four, stated that:

Therefore we call on the Government and the White people of South Africa, not excepting ourselves and our own Black churches, to humbly pray and seek God's will to turn away from the evil of all racial injustices in favour of new radical social order in which there will among others be, an equal distribution of power, responsibility and land. Adequate housing for Black peoples, the end to the present migratory labour system and consequent disruptions of many Black families. Also the right for Blacks to own land and homes, and to open shops, businesses and industry everywhere they wish. Proportionately equal money spent by the State for the free equal education and for children of every race. Adequate training centres for the people of all races for commerce and industry and an end to job reservation and colour bar industry and commerce.

The theological demand for taking the side of the poor was well expanded by Chikane (in Villa Vicencio 1985:100-102), emphasising that doing theology begins with involvement in the struggles and hopes of oppressed people. Christians are called to practice spirituality rooted in an option for oppressed peoples. What in essence does it mean to take sides with the oppressed? Chikane discovered the possible danger of the oppressed themselves manipulating the situation. Taking sides with the oppressed (1985:102) means to take sides with the victims in their conflicting conditions. In the end both the victim and the victimiser must benefit by being liberated from the sinful structures of oppression. There is no question of neutrality or isolation, both together with others must be engaged in striving for the liberation which is expected. This must be the outcome of the theology in a conflict situation.

Mosala (in Villa Vicencio 1985:109) emphasised the formation of a theology of the working class in which suddenly he included the AICs. To him the task of Black Theology was to identify among other things the distinctive forms of working class culture and to use them as the basis of developing theological strategies for liberation. He emphatically stated that the AICs are one of the fertile areas for discovering such culture. In this way the preferential option for the poor helped to revoke a consciousness among the Black theologians of the need to evaluate their theological approach in terms of its effectiveness, stand and contextual orientation. It is very clear, therefore, that for both Black Theology as well as AICs, the necessity of the preferential option for the is self - evident. This option which is so central to much contemporary theology, can therefore in my opinion serve as an obvious starting point for the debate.

4.1.2 The priority/primacy of Black experience

An issue arising directly from the previous section, is the question: How does the Christian community identify the poor it has to opted for? The consensus in black Theology has always been that an essential prerequisite should be the priority/ primacy of Black experience. It can probably be expected that there will be differences of opinion among Black theologians and AICs about defining this priority. It is necessary, therefore that I discuss this issue in some detail.

Setiloane (2000:60) defines the relationship between Black Theology and the AICs (although with strong emphasis on African Theology)very well. To him the reconciling point between the two is Black Consciousness. Black Theology has taught about the God of justice, and righteousness, and retribution, who employs frail and defenceless people as agents of his wrath to pluck and to cast down and to liberate. This has given meaning to the ghetto-township people. African Theology (including the AICs) has also brought back the past heritage of black people. It has offered the opportunity of self understanding.

For Africans, vital participation is of the utmost importance. This is bolstered by a proper self understanding. Africans also have refused to be treated as things or be manipulated for selfish ends because “Motho ke Modimo⁵⁶” means “a person is a God” traditionally meaning that a human

⁵⁶The concept “Motho ke Modimo” does not necessarily meaning that a human being is to be worshipped like God, rather human life deserves respect to such an extend that abusing other people or barbaric practices do not appreciate human life as a precious gift of God.

being is a righteous creature. There is not much space to express the feelings of Setiloane (2000:60) in his explanation of human life, but in a nutshell he distinguishes between a "person" and "Motho" which is supposed to be a translation of the latter. "Motho" therefore means that which cannot be taught, according to traditional Africa, because it originates from "Ga Loowe" meaning the abyss.

An emphasis of this nature gives Black consciousness the authenticity it requires, because it carries in itself *Mekgwa ya borarona* "the behaviour of our forefathers". Black Theology supposes that it formulates its theology for the black people while having taken into account these traditional social factors. Thus here is (or is supposed to be) a mutuality between Black Theology and African Theology. In America they have Afro-American Black Theology, which while comparable in patterns to Black Theology in South Africa, differs in context and emphasis. Most South African Blacks believe that American Blacks are more progressive in terms of their resources and culture. This means that Black Theology cannot use every experience borrowed from the American version without also utilising the local experience.

It is not clear how Goba (1988:105-108) sees the development of these models as practical, systematic and creating critical programmes, which he has earlier emphasised as a concern for a sound Black theological praxis. White theologians have made progress in this regard. The works of Sundkler and Oosthuizen, among others, provide the existing research material, which Black theologians have not yet started to organise and produce. They have not yet conducted interviews and attended AICs church services to show their solidarity, appreciation or dissatisfaction with what these churches have done. It is true on the other hand that Black theologians can argue that their calling should not be particularised among the black masses since they were called to serve the whole black nation.

Black theologians need to accept that they have done very little in attempting to make contributions to the AICs. This suggests that a new plan of action is needed in which Black Theology can cooperate with the AICs in order to reflect on their ways of understanding the primacy of black experience in theology. The issue is, how to reach the grassroots. This does not mean that Black theologians do not know how. What Goba (1988:108-9) has perceived to be

beneficial to the black church, includes the following:

- (a) the altering of the environmental conditions identified at various places as economic injustice, unequal opportunity, prejudice, unemployment and disease;
- (b) to alter Black people's beliefs about themselves, variously identified as feelings of hopelessness, apathy, anonymity, etc.;
- (c) and to educate the people, primarily so that they can learn more about each another, as basis for greater cooperation, and secondly, so that they can manage their affairs much better.

These three highlighted points need to be substantiated, simply because AIC followers will have to understand and attach meaning to them as well. "How" should all this be done? This is a definite question which will be posed by the AICs themselves and everyone who is concerned about the study of these groups. Development has also been taking place among the AICs themselves; Moremi (in Shank 1991:60) has indicated that:

One of the leaders of the AICs who was himself a detainee, frustrated by the situation in this country, "prophesied": " a large group of young (blacks) intellectuals are placing their hopes in the Independent churches". And this seemed to be the trend in the rest of independent Africa where young intellectuals, frustrated by continued injustice, remove the stress from African culture in their theologising, and are turning their consideration on more overtly political issues.

It gives the AICs appreciation, for the first time, of being regarded as an important vehicle for the contextual and culturally orientated theology, but also they are perceived as possibly providing for needs and newly surfaced political aspirations. The apocalyptic strain in their theology will reflect an important formation of a political orientation and consciousness.

One factor which the Black theologians should be aware of at this juncture, is the material possession of the AICs. The AIC leaders have purchased farms on which they live in isolation with their followers. They have isolated themselves from the centralised political institutions. This could

create a condition of community cohesiveness where various political groupings could be integrated within the oppressive situation. On the socio economic level the AICs reflect a different picture of autonomy from that of Black Theology. They are self-supportive and self-sufficient, not necessarily because of the working class alone. There are other self designed means such as “pledging extensive amounts of money” to their churches. This is done, expecting more returns in the form of material blessings from God.

As a result the Land Act of 1913 and the 1926 Mines and Works, Act, some leaders of the AICs purchased farms and properties to build churches and create means of farming, to provide for themselves and members. In these days those farms are now independent states: think of Motlollo in North West where Ma-Nku's church is built, or Moria of Lekganyane in Pietersburg. These are two examples of such well established AIC estates.

In the area of women's contributions also there is an important development, their talents rather than gender determining their social and leadership status. They are leaders of the churches and prophetesses, chairladies, organizers, and many women hold positions of influence in these churches. In what way will Black Theology feature in these above structures? It is clear that a different foundation is laid down as a challenge by these churches to Black Theology.

However it seems difficult to be a supporter of the AICs while one does not belong to their circles. The agents of liberation, black theological professionals, need a new theological understanding of their role in the new South Africa. It goes without saying that if Black Theology regards the AICs as a significant component for realising a sound Black Theology, then either Black Theology will absorb the AIC material or vice versa in this process.

The alterations which Goba is talking about are in two edged as well. It is not only the AICs who need to be transformed but also Black Theology. Black theologians should not become bureaucratic. While they are enjoying commanding the people of God, they should also constantly remember that they were called to serve in the ministry of liberation. My feeling is that the suggested outlook about the way in which AICs should be transformed or supported in line with the three mentioned points of alterations suggested by Goba, as a means of reinforcement in their

new outlook.

What are the Black theologians saying about this new challenge? It is Buthelezi (in Moore 1973:34) whose view wraps up the abovementioned discussion decisively by concurring that:

A genuine theology grows out of dynamic forces of life, forces which are decisive for the shaping of everyday life. As far as I can judge, Black Theology is nothing but a methodological formula whose genius consists in paying tribute to the fact that theological honesty cannot recognise the peculiarity of black man's situation. To be honest one needs first to reconstruct the situation in which our grandfathers lived.

If Black Theology is a methodological formula, it will need a body through which it can function. In as much as AICs have their own theology it could be suggested that Black Theology as a methodology is more open than the AIC's theological method which is suited more to the member's understanding than to that of outsiders. In other words Black Theology can only be a church if it is connected to or accepted by specific "groups".

The emphasis by Black theologians on Black Theology as a systematic and critical method of theologising in specific conditions demands a seminary classroom analysis. However, the creation of such a classroom condition demands to be rooted in specific contexts. If Black Theology regards itself as a theological "charter" for black people, this may suggest that sometimes it may be needed, while at other times it may not. Black theological method must be operational all the time, for the struggle is a continuous process. And it should undoubtedly be rooted in that very important context created by the self - confident existence of AICs.

Black persons must be enabled through the interpretation and application of the Gospel to realise that blackness, like whiteness, is a good natural gift of God and not some cosmological curse. Here, according to Buthelezi (1973:35), is where the contribution of Black Theology's methodological technique must apply. The very technique must take the context of the people seriously. It must caution the preacher and minister to stop preaching "pie in the sky" religion, but

instead to come down and toil with the black man spiritually and existentially in the sweat and dust of daily life.

The emphasis by Buthelezi above suggests taking the context seriously, which will appeal to the need for a black theological hermeneutic, which Goba (1988:117) has suggested. Mosala already has responded in his publication "Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa" 1989. In his work Mosala emphasised the search for a biblical hermeneutic which will expose the forms which biblical interpretations take. He also mentioned that it is liberating to recognise that "not every God of every biblical text is on the side of the poor, nor is it desirable that this should be so". Thus (1989:8) the search for biblical hermeneutical weapons of the struggle must take the form of a critical interrogation of the history, culture, and ideology of the readers or appropriators of the biblical text.

The encouragement by Mosala raises the question once more: How? A critical interrogation of history, culture and ideology requires platforms on which they can be dealt with effectively. In chapter two of this dissertation the history of Black Theology was dealt with, along with that of the AICs. Black Theology could be traced to the times of the early missionaries in South Africa. It was an eye opener to realise how the black struggle fitted well in that era. The labour struggle in the mining industries readily accommodated the essential component in Black Theology, of class struggle. Culturally people were scattered all over South Africa in search of work while families were broken down. These historical, economic and cultural realities should inform the debate on the priority/primacy of Black experience, among the Black theologians as well as in AICs.

A simple shift of thinking patterns by most Black theologians towards African Theology is not by itself a safe guard. The "detained consciences"⁵⁷ amongst the black people need to be freed from foreign detentions. When people talk about their history and cultures as merely unfamiliar

⁵⁷"Detained conscience" is referring to the psychological release from the past traumas of apartheid. There should be a clinical exercise to address the most depressing issues in the consciences of the black people, particularly the grassroots. An example is the occupation of farms illegally in Zimbabwe to show how people's anger and frustrations are not necessarily directed against the white farmers but against the government itself. Who can guarantee that it may not happen in South Africa?

activities, it will be unlikely to reap any good. Black theologians must be Africans before they can claim to be the mouthpieces of the indigenous African. If they cannot, it will be unacceptable for them to critique, say, the white scholars who have made progress in researching the AICs. The other question will be; what attire will they be putting on to do different research from the already existing research by white scholars into the AICs?

The AIC appeal to speaking for themselves and who they are should convey a message to both white researchers and Black Theologians that now is the time for the very AICs to do things their own way. It is so simply because there is no one who is able to address their burning issues satisfactorily. The already available information about the AICs from Black Theologians is a mere description of what they are thinking about the AICs, not of what they are doing together with the AICs.

In the section “preferential option for the poor” above the emphasis on how the SACC was perceived by the AICs should not be taken lightly for this perception applies to Black Theology as well. AICs saw the SACC as a mere material opportunity in terms of charity. The AIC representatives were not effective at all simply because SACC was a strange organisation to them. They did not know how to sell their experiences to this huge council of churches, which was homogeneous in that all the other churches were forming a single block which had isolated the AIC experience consciously or unconsciously. This information is highlighted to create awareness among Black theologians, to strengthen their weaker points in dealing with the AICs.

It is again not an easy task to incorporate all the groups which form part of the component of African Theology itself into. Its language was so strange to Black theologians that they approached it with a great sense of caution. Is this caution not going to bring once more a distorted picture of a theological theory to African Theology itself? The ideas of Manas Buthelezi, Maimela, Mosala, Mofokeng, and Motlhabi among others will be useful in a minimal way because of their ecclesiological backgrounds, which in their western forms seem to be irreversible.

Mosala (1989:190-92) came up with an interesting observation: that there is no likelihood of one emerging Black Theology of liberation. That Black theologians as the products and inheritors of black history and culture, are differentially inserted into this history and culture. His study has discovered and recognised a plurality of black theologies of liberation as a reality for contemporary South Africa. Once more Mosala is evading “taking the bull by its horns”; instead of coming out strongly against his denominational position he created a scapegoat by suggesting that there were many forms of Black Theology. His suggestions immediately raise the question, why then does Black Theology not appreciate the input made by interested scholars other than blacks themselves?

What Mosala thinks is lacking, is the systematic and critical study of the bible by grassroots. He discovered that the AICs, as comprising of a majority of illiterates, have adopted a simple method of attaching a meaning to their understanding of the bible. The most effective way of involving them would be to encourage them to read the bible “backwards” as he suggested. This will in a way engage them and assist in freeing them from “laziness” in reading the bible.

This is a very interesting suggestion for it has never happened nor been suggested by any of his predecessors. It means perhaps to start reading the Bible from within the textual verses which fascinate AIC members, not literally starting to understand and interpret the Bible from the New Testament itself. It would be naive to criticise Mosala without crediting some of his vital contributions to the value of Black Theology itself. Mosala’ (1989:192) observes that there is in the first instance what he calls bourgeois liberation theologies.

In contemporary times, especially under conditions of the monopoly of capitalism in South Africa, the non discursive sociological expression of this religious practice has come in the Zion Apostolic African churches. The biblical hermeneutics of this religious practice, in the absence of a theoretically well grounded theological discourse, are subversives, non systematic working class distortion of the Bible in favour of the struggle of its members. This last brand of Black Theology is what Mosala regards as potentially the most genuinely liberating.

Black theologians are groomed within particular Churches either from the Protestant or Roman Catholic traditions, which often limits them. How effectively will they be able to influence the AIC bourgeoisies of, say, the ZCC, the St. John Apostolic Faith Mission Church of the late Mrs Nku or the Church of Shembe for argument sake? None of the academic scholars worries any of these great AICs. They have all the necessary resources, in the form of money, doctrinal influence including material. Different routes taken to influence the lower structures of these churches do not necessarily effect any change to these giant AIC structures.

It is also necessary to ask what Black Theology thinks of a theology that will change the respective black mainline church structures. The point of departure to legitimize Black Theology is first to radically change these mainline bodies in the light of AIC church practice. This will always remain a mammoth task for Black Theologians. Another important conclusion is that in a society divided by class, race, and gender there must certainly be a plurality of biblical hermeneutics. This suggests that the grass-root community's world-views comprise more than one common religious experience. In an interview Archbishop Shilenge (transcript Bethesda, Atteridgeville 8 September 1994) of the Bethesda Spiritual Church of God in South Africa (a member of the AICs) supports this. He indicated that his approach to reading the scriptures includes the Islamic Koran and other scriptures in many instances.

In his "book shelf collection" at home he has a Koran which is well kept just as the Muslims do, although he emphasised that he regards himself as a Christian. When I asked him why he was using both the Bible and Koran his response was: "because the Koran is a Holy book just like the Bible". These two scriptures reveal the knowledge of God. One can quickly judge his interpretation of Christianity for being distorted. However, how can one not remember the tension that exists between Islam and Christianity in many parts of Africa? AICs in South Africa may not have a problem in relating to them unlike in Nigeria and North Africa where the situation is different from the South of this continent. What matters most to Shilenge was not necessarily the written scripture but their symbolic attributes in terms of understanding the meaning of "holiness" and the message from God above.

If the God of the bible is the same as Allah of Islam or, again, carries the same meaning as Modimo (the one who is above) in African traditional religion then who is more real among these deities and how? This gave Bishop Shilenge a free choice in decision making. He argued that God could be reached by more means than one. His preferential choice was Christianity. Yet he is taking every religion seriously and therefore does not undermine any as long as he can read goodness in it. Is this not a pluralistic creativity and platform for theological argument in another direction? Perhaps it has already been done but here it is more practical than one would have thought.

It should however be remembered that even though someone else came up with what is believed to be an acceptable interpretation of the Bible, what Shilenge (1994:12) understood about the Bible was in a way the basis of his scriptural hermeneutical understanding. Perhaps the approach by Mosala of reading the bible from different perspectives, could be of great help in somehow creating a different view of the scriptures. Reading the scriptures from the perspective of the people's context makes sense to them, and corrections if necessary could be made from that very perspective. In this way Black Theology becomes creative and significant to the study of theology of the AIC as part of the black community.

The question arising from Bishop Shilenge's understanding of the scriptures is but one among many raised by the AICs in seeking to understand who they really are, and the form of theology is which are meaningful to them. Mosala's suggestions for a constructive Black Theology demand an expansive exercise of Black Theologians questioning their personalities and engagement in terms of relationships and communication with the AIC leaders, ministers and members. Without taking seriously the context of the people, this is unlikely to reach out effectively to them. A good theoretical analysis that cannot be applied in a concrete situation does not benefit anyone at all.

If Black Theologians want to remain relevant and effective they have to listen to the voices of the people. Imported knowledge should be carefully applied, especially taking into consideration the levels of understanding of the people. In other words the data which is researched and used, should be generated by the people themselves. Black Theology in this regard will have to remain a refiner, by preparing what can be used, and how it should be arranged in terms of theologising

and reaching out. This can be done only through self engagement and denial.

Many Black Theologians have adopted the principle of not attending the AIC church services which raise questions about how they will teach people without understanding their daily frustrations and experiences. It is interesting to note that even Mosala was only convinced that the ZCCs are a force to reckon with after attending their Easter service in Moria. Daneel was committed to supporting the AICs in Zimbabwe through his experience of not less than twenty years working and living with them. The SACC has not made much success among the AICs in South Africa because they have had very little time and desire to interact and seek means of understanding them.

Accurate theological information can only be derived from the people's awareness of and interests in the study taking place. If Black Theologians oppose White Theology by mere debating in academic institutions and centres their voices and judgements will not impact on the grassroots people. Mosala's third option in his conclusions, calls for direct interaction with the people. Perhaps Black Theology is the moment more ecumenical than contextual.

AICs should inform Black Theology in that they form part of the poor communities in South Africa. Traditionally Black Theology transcends "class" as its foundation. It should therefore associate itself with the total black life experience based in the context of a black person's understanding of reality. AICs should be seen as basic foundation of Black Theology itself. Black Theology apart from resisting engagement against apartheid should view the AICs and African traditionalism as its foundation and source of its future reference.

The reality of the existence of a Black bourgeoisie should not deter black Theologians from engaging them in debate with the AIC's leaders such as Lekhanyane of the ZCCs, Mrs Nku of St. John's, Modise of the International Pentecostal Church, Shembe and his Church. These leaders were not deterred by any of the developments in class structures because of the influences they had on their respective churches. When Mosala visited the ZCCs, in Moria this did not make any change to the ZCCs rather it was Mosala himself who had to review his standpoint on Black Theology, in favour of the AICs incorporation.

The reality is that both Black Theology and the AICs represents also the “top layers” of the colonial missionary church development in South Africa. When we look back at the times of Nehemiah Tile, it is clear that secessions occurred due to awareness of and, protests against colonial missionary chauvinism by some of African leaders. The regular recorded visits overseas by most of the AIC leaders prove their financial reputation and proficiency in speaking English. The Sol Plaatjes of those days (in which some of the leaders were Church ministers holding degrees) reflect the academic achievement of many of the black secessionist leaders.

Perhaps we should outline the common objectives of both Black and AIC theological trends, which included among others areas such as identity, blackness, survival, meaningfulness of faith and leadership. All these have surfaced in the previous chapters and need not be discussed fully here. One step forward will be to look into the theological formulas of both Black Theology and AIC theological trends to create a basis of understanding. It should be understood that the church founder's “vision” is an unshakable foundation on which his or her particular church will exist and function forever among the AICs. The followers’ responsibility helps to sustain the very vision. The Bible is used to encourage and cherish the vision itself because it is an instruction from the Creator God.

The AICs will always welcome those who recognise them as meaningful components of the basic foundations of the black African church. Apart from being AICs they also formed the basis of the disadvantaged community in the South African society. Black Theology and the AICs have been existing and operating with different agendas for a long time even though they traditionally belong together. It is now time for the two to begin to negotiate towards a common goal, of that giving African Christianity meaning.

4.1.3 Spirituality

In the past spirituality was mainly regarded as a concept which tended to point to the life hereafter experience. It was presented as opium, according to Nash (1985:36), to deaden people’s sensitivity to the issues of social, economic and political injustice by focussing their attention on the need to cultivate the soul for the hereafter. To a certain extent this could have haunted most of the Black Theologians and forced them to focus more on the social aspects of theology than

the spirituality of it.

However it will be naive to categorically state that AICs were always short of a social expression in their Church practices or spirituality. As ranked with the voiceless and poor of the poorest, certainly they were part of the afflicted disadvantaged masses in South Africa during all the time apartheid functioned until the post apartheid era. Certainly, spirituality was never separated from social concern in their ministries. This view is very close to the fact that in African Tradition matter and spirit are viewed as fully integrated with each other; the divorce between them (Nash 1985:36) was due to a kind of Christianity influenced by the Hellenistic tendency to despise the flesh and material things.

This implies that the social emphasis by the Black Theologians in South Africa was encompassing the spirituality of solidarity with the transcendent powers, whether it is ancestral or biblical. Both theologies can now advance towards the "round table" to welcome and negotiate with each other. The spiritual function of Black Theology was obscured by perhaps the heavy political terminologies which it had placed upon its shoulders. AICs emphasised transcendent spirituality to such an extent that their this-worldly involvement was obscured. An exchange of thoughts seeking to justify one's own position may not reach any meaningful conclusion. Both groups should rather embrace an open debate to strengthen their respective positions. The Spirit leads and quickens people's lives. It makes them sensitive to the needs of others. It also assures people, according to Charles in Masamba (1983:3), that they are not alone but that they are sustained by one who will neither leave nor forsake them. God cares for his people always. If the fulness is experienced by everyone as a gift from God through Christ, the black church in its totality will benefit.

The outcome should not necessarily be a theology which wants to motivate the weaker to "fight only" but also to experience and express the course of a discipleship in terms of the African interpretation of the gospel. This very expression is born out of a question posed by Pityana (in Villa Vicencio et al 1994:181) whether Black Theology can make any contribution to the changing circumstances of South Africa, while the domination of South African society by racist values and

a denial of the value and dignity of black people continues in church and society⁵⁸.

Black Theology cannot afford to rely on human power, but it should begin to investigate the forces that control human power as well. In this case the Holy Spirit as we understand it from the Bible is a must. The AICs have discovered it as a secret weapon to address their unresolved issues including sickness, witchcraft, poverty, birth, natural disasters and humanness. They have not relied on the Holy Spirit as it was interpreted by the westerners, but rather they have compared it with the powerful Spirit which have prevailed in African continent and the whole world before the colonial era. They use the power of the ancestors to reach out to the very primordial stages beyond human comprehension.

Goba (1988:118) warned the black Church against being co-opted into a "neo apartheid" strategy reflected in the current reform initiatives promoted by the business community and some whites. The essence of spirituality, as Nolan in Villa Vicencio (1985:195-96) indicated, was that which moved Jesus to identify with the poor, sinners, prostitutes and tax collectors. They included people who were hungry and thirsty and begging on the streets. What made Jesus identify with them was not their piety but their suffering. Jesus option led him totally to identify with the poor: "whatever you do to the least of these you do to me" (Matt.25:40,45). Spirituality therefore, to both Black Theology and the AICs, means the resuscitation of the old life in the new. It is the activity of those who are constantly in search of God and for answers to their deep problems. It also encourages people to learn to be free. Maltman in Goba (1988:104) summarises it in this way:

The new people of God see themselves in their existence and form as the creation of the Spirit and therefore as the initial fulfilment of the new creation of all things and glorifying of God. The Spirit calls them to life; Spirit gives the community the authority of mission; It makes its living powers and ministries that spring from the ineffective; Also it unites, orders and preserves it. It therefore sees itself and its powers and tasks as deriving from and existing in the eschatological history of the

⁵⁸Pityana's concern was whether the polarised and conflictual theology could help society to discover the common values upon which a good society may be built. Can Black Theology become a vehicle for reaching out to the common humanity and values which may bind the diverse cultures and communities in South Africa together?

Spirit.

I have already indicated that Spirituality means “hope” for every member among the AICs and it is also hope for every Black theologian who is serious about dealing with issues of injustice. Working in the Spirit, according to Gutierrez (1984:89), is an activity of the community on the move. This is a dimension of every Spirituality, despite presentations at times that it suggests a purely individual journey. “Spirituality of hope” may mean the ultimate encounter with God and humanity in Jesus to resolve the crisis which people have no means or strength to overcome. It means God’s intervention in that crisis for saving his or her people. In the Spirit therefore both the AICs and Black Theology must adventure to penetrate the hearts of all people, both just and unjust. Black Theology must set the new progressive agenda and AICs will have to become more critical and not romanticise all prevalent practices. These two theological trends could illuminate interest and foster awareness towards empowering the black society in South Africa and elsewhere in the world.

4.1.4 Complementarity

Black Theology and AIC Theology will have to clarify the question “where they are” at the moment; this will help to lay down the factual ground for a fruitful debate. Pityana (in Moore 1973:63) has indicated that Black Theology seeks to commit black people to risks of affirming the dignity of black personhood. this must be done not only in isolated incidents like uprising of 1976 black people have long history which surpass the mining history in South Africa. If blackness is not an emotional outburst as Pityana (in Moore 1973:60) has concurred, it must then surpass the 1976 revolt in South Africa.

The most difficult issue is the doubts or fears which Black Theology had in relating to the development of African Theology. Black Theologians seem to feel comfortable if they are the only engineers of it, while seemingly they may be unwilling to share their formulae with theological engineers other than those from their own school of thought. Who then have mandated the Black Theologians to be the sole theologisers for the black masses? This is why it was indicated earlier that Black Theology in South Africa should not be limited to the uprisings of 1976, but it should

stretch way back also in history to Ntsikana, Tiyo Soga and Tile's time, when the earlier South African Blacks first began to grapple with the discriminatory attitude of the Whites to the blacks in church and outside the church.

Such an unbiased complementarity must be expected also from the African Independent churches to their own fellow Black brothers and sisters. Both parties must lay the foundations of basic trust and openness to foster a healthy arena of open debate. There is no way in which the legitimacy of AIC theology can be questioned or be declared to be in a state of crisis. AIC theology was originally built upon the solid rock of the African culture of self understanding. It should again be stressed that Black Theologians mostly are genuine mainline traditionalists, which in itself could create a critical concern for the AICs themselves.

Perhaps a concluding remark could be based upon Maluleke's emphasis on the deepening of meaning to take steps ahead to make progress. Such deepening of meaning will only become a reality if, together, "all God's people" seek to understand the full meaning of God's love for all his children (Eph.3:19). A remaining critical question is whether Black Theologians will take the debate with the AICs seriously? Will they review their own relationships with their respective traditional churches? If not, how effectively do they think that their theology will bring change through the use of their ideology?

To the same extent it should be asked: Will AICs take seriously the debate with Black Theologians? If AICs leaders and members consider themselves self-sufficient and above criticism, how are they going to influence the whole body of Christ? The truth is: Both Black Theologians and the AICs need each other. The phenomenal growth in AIC numbers will have little meaning if is not accompanied by self-critical theological reflection. The important theological gains made by Black Theologians will shrivel and die away if not grounded in a living, believing community. The continued well being of the body of Christ in South Africa thus urgently motivates the need for a serious debate between these different members of the body.

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