

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE WORKS
OF G. C. OOSTHUIZEN ON THE
SHEMBE CHURCH**

by

Protas Linda Zwane

Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree of

Master of Theology

in the subject

Missiology

at the

University of South Africa

Supervisor: J.N.J.Kritzinger

February 1999

Summary

The membership of the African Independent Churches is growing day by day. Research into the growth of this phenomenon is being conducted by various scholars. G.C. Oosthuizen studied the African Independent Churches in general, and the Shembe Church, in particular. This study examines Oosthuizen's research of the African Independent Churches by analysing the three books that he devoted specifically to the Shembe Church. A set of five criteria is developed to evaluate Oosthuizen as a researcher. The study finds that his background and formation affected the research he conducted and contributed to the type of picture he portrayed of the Shembe Church. Oosthuizen, as a scholar of religion, sometimes allowed his theological interests to influence his research. As an empirical researcher Oosthuizen attempted to let the AICs "speak for themselves" but his theological interests caused him to make value judgements which influenced his research findings.

Key Terms

Research methodology, Isaiah Shembe, G.C. Oosthuizen, African Independent Churches, AIC research, *Izihlabelelo*, *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, Church of the Nazarites, Shembe Church and research evaluation,

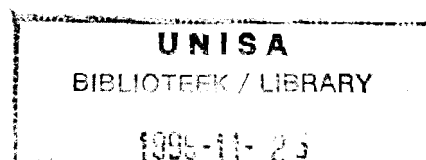
Acknowledgements

1. Bishop M.P.Nkhumishe of Witbank, for his assistance and encouragement.
2. Prof. J.N.J.Kritzinger, for his critical and firm yet gentle guidance.
3. St John Vianney Seminary, staff and students, for sharpening in me the need for this study.
4. Mrs Stella Temple, for her patience in typing and proof reading this thesis.
5. My family, for their support. I dedicate this work to my father, who passed away in 1998.

Declaration

"I declare that **An Analysis of the Works of G. C. Oosthuizen on the Shembe Church** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I also declare that this dissertation has previously not been submitted at another university".

P.L.Zwane.



289.93072 ZWAN



0001735618

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
1.	INTRODUCTION	1.
	1.1 Relevance	1.
	1.2 Research problem	3.
	1.3 Method of study	4.
	1.4 Outline of study	5.
	1.5 Sources	6.
	1.6 Personal stance	6.
2.	BIOGRAPHY OF G. C. OOSTHUIZEN	8.
3.	THREE BOOKS OF G. C. OOSTHUIZEN ON SHEMBE	12.
	3.1 The Life and Ministry of Isaiah Shembe	12.
	3.2 Post-Christianity in Africa	13.
	3.3 The Theology of a South African Messiah - Summary of the position	16.
	3.3.1 Supreme Being	16.
	3.3.2 The Messiah	18.
	3.3.3 "Umoya"	20.
	3.3.4 The Sabbath	21.
	3.3.5 The Saints	21.
	3.3.6 Holy Communion	22.
	3.3.7 Baptism	22.
	3.3.8 <i>Ekuphakameni</i>	23.
	3.4 Basic Methodology of Research	24.
	3.5 Objectives of research	25.
	3.6 Criteria for analysis and evaluation	26.
	3.6.1 Attitude	26.
	3.6.2 Shembe and Christ	27.
	3.6.3 Shembe and the Holy Spirit	27.
	3.6.4 Origins of the Shembe Church	27.
	3.7 Succession Conflict within the Church of the Nazarites	28.
	3.7.1 Summary of his position in the book	28.
	3.7.2 Basic Methodology of research	31.
	3.7.3 Objectives of research	32.
4.	EVALUATION OF G. C. OOSTHUIZEN AS A RESEARCHER	33.
	4.1 Oral History	35.
	4.2 Terminology	37.
	4.3 Fusion of two worlds	38.
	4.4 Procedures	38.
	4.5 Language	41.
	4.6 Commitment	42.
	4.7 Method of research	43.
5.	CONCLUSION	51.
6.	LIST OF REFERENCES CITED	54.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Relevance:

The African Independent Churches are growing day by day. In urban areas some people leave the mainline churches to become members of the African Independent Churches. In rural situations many members of the African Independent Churches did not belong to the mainline churches before they joined the African Independent Churches. They mostly belonged to the Traditional African Religion. Those who are members of the African Independent Churches speak about a sense of belonging which they could not find in any of the mainline churches. They talk about a sense of brotherhood or sisterhood which is a source of strength and support for their daily living. A number of people claim to have been healed of their sicknesses in these churches. They eventually recover to full normal life. As a result of experiences like these the membership of these churches is growing and the mainline churches, in particular, lose some of their members to these churches. People who join these churches seem to find meaning in their suffering and struggles.

At this stage in South Africa no one can doubt the importance of these churches. Maluleke (1997:7) points out that the African Independent Churches are adding to and becoming a facet of African theology at one and the same time. Furthermore, the numerical growth of these churches means that they have, in many parts of Africa, become the "mainline" churches. This very fact of noted significance of these churches is enough justification for this study. This study will reflect on this crucial facet of African Christianity.

Bosch (1987:9) has this to say about the African Independent Churches :

"Few students of the African religious scene today would doubt the importance and significance - also for the future of Christianity on this continent - of the African Independent Churches. These Churches together with similar Christian movements among other primal societies in Melanesia, the Americas and elsewhere, may indeed be seen as the fifth major Christian Church type after the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Reformation, and the Pentecostal Churches."

Oosthuizen (1986: 233) sees the African Independent Churches as “ Independent innovations with their own indigenous forms of religious expression, emphasising a sense of belonging”. Oosthuizen (1986: 240) continues to state that “the indigenous churches have led many away from the micro to the macrocosmic world, from a passive approach to one directly involved in socio-economic change, from communal emphasis to more openness, from the “strong-man” symbol to symbols which enhance progress and development.”

Maboea (in Oosthuizen 1994:127) sees the African Independent Churches as answering to the deep need for healing. He sees the African Independent Churches as a place for healing. The African Independent Churches have the ability of handling some problems which the mainline Churches cannot cope with. “A strong sense of belonging and of security is important for them, and this is realised in the care the members have for one another”. Maboea continues to state that “the need to establish a caring fellowship, brotherhood and kinship, and to acknowledge God as the source of all answers in man’s life, prepared and eventually led to the rise and growth of the Independent Churches” (Oosthuizen 1994:128)

When looking at the healing ministry Oosthuizen states that “the prophet in the African Independent Churches concentrates on healing ministry. This is a result of the mission Churches having more or less discarded healing within the church by pushing it into the cold atmosphere of western orientation, individualistic hospitalization” (Oosthuizen 1992:166) Oosthuizen sees this African phenomenon as an answer to a “vacuum”. The African Independent Churches are filling in a deep need that was never taken care of by the mission churches.

This new phenomenon, in South Africa in particular, where Africans are breaking away from white mission churches, Vilakazi calls “the African Reformation”. He states that one of the reasons of the separation of the churches is that the status of the African branch of the Church is that of an offshoot of the “elect” white church. He saw most of the leaders leaving the mother church because of their inability to submit to discipline. “... if the opportunity for the maintenance of that dignity is denied to the Africans by the White man, then the African will create and inhabit their own world with its own values “,(Vilakazi 1986:17). The Africans want to assert their significance as human beings.

The growth of this phenomenon, with its effect on traditional theology, its importance and potential, deserves a closer attention and scientific analysis.

1.2 Research Problem:

Oosthuizen in his review of Daneel (1977) saw that the cause for the growth of the African Independent Churches can be economical, political and denominational issues. "The predominant factor is the Christianising of African traditional religions and also other notions within the Church for the sake of communication in depth" (1977: 81). There is a quest for the Christianisation of the African notion of the Church like forceful preaching, rainmaking, reinterpretation of various rituals, detection of wizardry, healing, dreams, symbolism and the ritual expression of the link between the living and the dead. He states that these Churches are churches in their own right and they flourish in the rural areas. The urban congregations are extensions of the rural religious activities. Whatever happens when members of the African Independent Churches gather in urban areas is just exactly what was happening back at home in the rural areas, and a continuation of it. It is mainly a gathering of people from the rural areas in the city to keep their identity.

Trying to understand the African Independent Churches, Oosthuizen (1973: 185) states that "Independent" usually means independent *from* western mission churches. Oosthuizen sees that the emphasis should rather be on the positive, namely independent *to*. Independent to means in order to be the church in Africa where the selfhood of the church is at stake. This is an important definition because it states the vision of the African Independent Churches. Such a definition views this movement in a positive light.

Oosthuizen, states that in 1960 75 to 80 percent of all black South African Christians were members of the mainline churches. Only 12 to 14 percent were members of the African Independent Churches. By 1991 the figures were 41 percent of black South African Christians in the mainline churches and 36 percent in the African Independent Churches. Oosthuizen maintains that there are some 6,000 denominations within the South African African Independent Church movement and that "A Christian sense of sharing and caring is their distinguishing mark." (1997:8). Such groups might not have a venue where to meet, but fellowship, spontaneity in worship, mutual discussions of problems, healing services that provide spiritual and physical refreshment and lively rituals are

important to them. From such a picture that Oosthuizen paints of the African Independent Churches, it is therefore not surprising that many South African Christians from the mainline churches attend African Independent Churches healing services. They either have dual membership (that is belonging to a mainline church and to an African Independent Church at the same time) or they just attend the African Independent Churches healing services at night.

Oosthuizen has this to say about the distinction between “independent” and “indigenous” churches: “There are two major strands within the African Independent Church movement of South Africa, designated by the terms “independent” and “indigenous”. Churches that split off from Western-oriented churches are referred to as “Independent”; Churches that were initiated by Africans themselves, never having had ties to Western missions, are referred to as “indigenous”. The former tend to selectively retain certain features of the churches from which they seceded, while the latter are more oriented to Traditional African Religions” (1997:9).

In this dissertation, I have chosen to :

- (a) Study the manner in which the African Independent Churches are being studied and interpreted by scholars from the mainline churches.
- (b) Use the works of one established African Independent Church scholar, i.e. G.C. Oosthuizen, as the focus of my study.
- (c) Analyse the writings of Oosthuizen on the Shembe Church, also known as the *iBandla lama Nazaretha* or the Nazarite Church. I will be studying the way this church has been studied. By doing this study I hope to contribute to a better (and a more sensitive or appropriate) research on the African Independent Churches. I will also point out the strengths and weaknesses of Oosthuizen’s approach.

1.3 Method of Study :

As already shown above, a strong orientation and motivation of this study is the realisation of the significance of the African Independent Churches. This, then is my basic assumption. Furthermore,

I propose that these Churches are an important expression of African Christianity. I will basically analyse the works of Oosthuizen on the Shembe Church. This analysis will be guided by the following principles:

- (a) I will first seek to offer an adequate summary of his main emphases in the books in question. Such a summary will help to highlight issues which are important for Oosthuizen. This will also show the basic assumptions of Oosthuizen and the approach that he has on the subject.
- (b) I will seek to understand the basic methodology of research in each particular book as found in Mouton and Marais (1988). This refers to the way the author gathered his information. I will look at whether the author used interviews, questionnaires, analysing a hymn book etc., to retrieve the information from his sources. The methodology of a research is important because it affects the results of the research in a fundamental way.
- (c) I will seek to understand what he regards as the objectives of his research. For every study that is done there should be an objective, namely the main aim of the researcher and what he/she is trying to achieve. Focusing on the main objective of the research will help me to give a fair account of the study and not to ask questions which the author does not intend to deal with in a particular study.
- (d) I will discuss his evaluation of the church and his criteria for evaluation.
- (e) I will then evaluate Oosthuizen's research as a whole. This evaluation of Oosthuizen will be important to me as I will be trying to see what prompted Oosthuizen to study the Shembe church. I will also look at the approach that Oosthuizen adopts and that will help me to understand the way he has studied the Shembe church.

1.4 Outline of Study :

I will look at the academic publications of Oosthuizen, starting with his earliest works. I will also look at his publications on the African Independent Churches in general. This will help to put the works of Oosthuizen on the Shembe church in the context of the work he did on the African

Independent churches in general. Going through his works will help to show whether the attitudes he had on the African Independent Churches in his early works are the same as those of his later works or not. This approach will also help to show whether there is any line of development that can be detected in his work.

In chapter two I will look at the biography of Oosthuizen. In chapter three I will look at the works of Oosthuizen on the African Independent Church in general. In chapter three I will look at *Post-Christianity in Africa* (Oosthuizen 1968) and *The Theology of a South African Messiah: An analysis of the hymnal of the Church of the Nazarites* (Oosthuizen 1967). I will study Oosthuizen's approach to this church, employing the five principles that I have mentioned above in 1.3. I will also look at the other work of Oosthuizen, titled : *Succession Conflict within the Church of the Nazarites* (Oosthuizen 1981). I will also look into this work using the five guiding principles.

In chapter four I will evaluate Oosthuizen as a researcher. Chapter five will be the conclusion. I will attempt to offer the missiological significance of Oosthuizen's work in the three books. This will also serve as the summary of my work. In this conclusion I hope to demonstrate the role that this church, in particular, can play in challenging the mainline churches to adapt to the way of life of their members. More important will be for me to show that the approach Oosthuizen takes towards the Shembe Church, and his attitude, plays a significant role in our understanding of the African Independent Churches in general.

1.5 Sources :

My sources for this study will be books, book reviews, articles and journals written by Oosthuizen on the topic of the Shembe Church. This is to be found primarily in three books, which he devoted entirely to the Shembe Church. His other works will help to put these two books in context.

1.6 Personal stance

I am approaching this important phenomenon in South Africa with my own bias. I am aware of the effects this church has on the membership of the mainline churches. From my background as a priest in the Roman Catholic Church I think there are many things we can learn from the African

Independent Churches. These churches seem to answer the needs and aspirations of many people, especially of the black population of South Africa. Members of the mainline churches seem to find meaning in the African Independent Churches. I am also approaching this study with a bias towards these churches because of their use of culture and customs in their worship. This is something important for me because I believe that if our religion does not take account of the culture of its members it is doomed to failure. I would like to look at the biases of Oosthuizen as an anthropological and also a theological researcher.

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHY OF G. C. OOSTHUIZEN

Gerhardus Cornelius Oosthuizen was born in 1922. He holds many academic qualifications. He holds graduate degrees from the Stellenbosch Theological Seminary and Union Seminary (New York), a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of South Africa and a doctorate in Theology from the Free University of Amsterdam. He served as a chaplain to the South African Air Force in Italy from December 1944 to March 1946. After this service to the Air Force he embarked on his studies for the ministry. From 1950 to 1959 he served as a minister to the Dutch Reformed Church in Zimbabwe and then proceeded to serve Queenstown in the Eastern Cape.

He received the Rockefeller Scholarship for advanced Religious Studies and the prestigious Alexander van Humboldt Scholarship. Dr. Oosthuizen then began his university teaching career in 1959. In that same year he was appointed head of the Department of Divinity at the University College of Fort Hare. He became a professor in and Dean of that Faculty of Theology in 1964. A number of black church leaders and academics were his students at Fort Hare. During 1960 Prof. Oosthuizen was offered a chair at another university and he declined the offer on three occasions. The reason for this is that he preferred direct contact with black students. He chose instead to work at the University of Durban-Westville. There at the University of Durban-Westville he was head of the Department of Theology from 1969 to 1971, the first full-time lecturer of Christian Theology. From then he became head of the Department of Science of Religion until 1984. Since 1984 Prof. Oosthuizen has been the Director of the Research Unit for New Religious Movement and Independent Churches (NERMIC) which is attached to the University of Zululand.

His work in Theology and Religious Studies has attracted attention of scholars from Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia and other African countries. He has researched and published on a variety of topics in church history, missiology, religious studies and theological ethics.

Oosthuizen did his work as an Afrikaner Christian. He belongs to the lay missionary tradition of the Dutch Reformed Church, as he was a missionary in Lovedale, Queenstown. His work, especially in Zululand, stimulated many people to do research. There are a number of students who graduated

under him. He created space for the African Independent churches to speak for themselves as it is illustrated by his book *The Story of Isaiah Shembe* (1996). For him that was a way of empowering the African Independent Churches.

Oosthuizen stimulated and encouraged the translation of Zulu oral history into English. His major contribution to the oral tradition of the Nazarite Church is the book *The Story of Isaiah Shembe*, which he planned together with Prof. Irving Hexham, a Canadian academic specialist in South African religions. In the book he wanted the oral history of the movement to be recorded. This is an illustration and a fulfilment of Oosthuizen's wish that the African Independent Churches speak for themselves. He did a great deal of work on the African Independent Churches. His aim was to help the African Independent Churches to speak about their own experience.

There was a progression in the work of Oosthuizen, from 1967 to 1981. His conversion from a negative stance towards the African Independent Churches to a more positive one, happened during the 70's. It is important to note that during the 70's he became more accommodating and sensitive to the African Independent Churches. The context of this conversion is the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement that influenced Oosthuizen to respect black initiatives. Such a self affirmation of Blacks made him respect the African Independent Churches. He also wrote an article in 1974 on Black Theology, arguing that the origin of Black Theology and Black Consciousness lies in the formation of the African Independent Churches (Oosthuizen 1974).

Oosthuizen joined the South African Defence Force at the age of 22 and served in the Air Force as a chaplain. At that age he had already completed a BA degree, a three-year theological course and had nearly fulfilled the requirements for an MA in Philosophy. To work with fighter pilots at that age was a great experience for him. As a chaplain in the Air Force Oosthuizen realised . . . "that pious outdated methods of communicating the christian message obtain nothing" (1982:32) This is the time when he started to think his theology through and to analyse it.

Oosthuizen was initially trained as a missionary at Wellington Missionary Institute. During the Second World War he felt the need to work in the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk. This meant that he had to go to Stellenbosch University and practically repeat everything he did when he studied to be a missionary. It is during this time that Oosthuizen applied to do his final year at the Free

University in Amsterdam. One of the reasons for him to do that was that he received very little academic stimulus in Stellenbosch as everything was just a repetition for him.

He spent 6 years as a minister in Zimbabwe after completing his studies. At the Union Theological Seminary in New York he lived with 25 ministers and theologians from 16 different countries. Oosthuizen sees being with such men from so many different backgrounds as a privilege for him. He then became Professor at the University of Fort Hare. That was the time when Oosthuizen came into contact with black theological students and with the African Independent Churches. He later went to Germany as a visiting professor at the Kirchliche Hochschule. After this time in Germany he came to Durban as a Professor in Science of Religion at the University of Durban-Westville at the end of the sixties.

In answer to a question whether his privileged South African background helped or hindered his involvement with the African Independent Churches, Oosthuizen (1998) replied:

I grew up on my father's farms named Arizona and Montana (two American States) but this did not mean I was privileged in a special way. My father started from scratch as all his cattle died from a cattle disease. The sincerity and deep faith of members of the African Independent Churches in what they believe impresses those who make genuine contact with these holistically orientated people in the context of *ubuntu* - sharing, caring and fellowship.

He spent a number of years doing research especially among the African Independent Churches. For him two things are uppermost as far as research is concerned: the value of research and the ignorance of a large section of the church in this country with regard to what is actually taking place among the African Independent Churches. His involvement in research helped him to be relevant and his interest in other churches grew. He mentioned that "many of our theologians move from their studies to their lecture rooms and back, without knowing about the other side of South Africa" (1982:34). Oosthuizen believes that pure religious facts do not exist because religion should be involved in all spheres of life. Hence his involvement with the African Independent Churches gave a practical dimension to his intellectual reflections.

He wrote the *Theology of a South African Messiah: An analysis of the hymnal of The Church of the Nazarites* (1967). In this book Oosthuizen deals with the hymns of this movement and analyses them. He does this because he believes that the hymns in this hymnal contain the doctrine of the Church of the Nazarite and this hymnal is a good catechism for the members of this Church. Oosthuizen also sees these hymns as good indigenous and original music.

In the *Succession Conflict within the Church of the Nazarite* (1981) Oosthuizen looks at the role leadership plays in the Church of the Nazarite. He looks at the leadership of Isaiah Shembe, the conflict that ensued after his death concerning his successor, the ensuing factions and divisions that followed, the court cases, the involvement of the Zulu monarchy and the government in trying to resolve such factions.

Oosthuizen's *Post-Christianity in Africa* (1968) deals with the phenomenon of the African Independent Churches. He sees them as neither Christian nor belonging to the African Traditional Religion. The African Independent Churches extensive use of their tradition and connection with Zulu way of life makes Oosthuizen to see them as a way of returning to their old way of life.

His article *Isaiah Shembe and the Zulu worldview* (1968) deals with the Zulu way of life, tradition and customs. In this book Oosthuizen looks at how this way of life affects and shapes the way the Church of the Nazarites worship. Most of the elements of this church are shaped along the traditional Zulu way of life.

His writings include *The Story of Isaiah Shembe* (1996) which deals with the oral tradition of the Church of the Nazarites. In this book the stories and experiences shared by members of Church of the Nazarites are translated and preserved.

Oosthuizen wrote extensively on the African Independent Churches. He wrote articles and book reviews in *Missionalia*. In his work he deals mainly with his research among the Zulu people. He was also invited on several occasions to read papers in meetings of the African Independent Churches. Having looked at Oosthuizen's academic career and publications in general, I now move on to a discussion of his three books.

CHAPTER 3

THREE BOOKS OF G. C. OOSTHUIZEN ON SHEMBE

Oosthuizen did a great deal of research on the *iBandla lamaNazaretha*. This church was started in 1911 by the Zulu prophet and healer Isaiah Shembe. Chidester (1992) states that by the time of Isaiah Shembe's death the *iBandla lamaNazaretha* had a following of nearly 30,000 members. They were all Zulu-speaking converts. Most of these converts were attracted by Shembe's power of healing. Chidester (1992) sees the support and stability that this movement offered in a world that seemed to be turned upside down by the destruction of the Zulu way of life as one of the main attractions. By the destruction of the Zulu way of life Chidester refers to the failed rebellion in 1906 and the widespread dispossession of land that followed the 1913 Land Act. The movement of the *iBandla lama Nazaretha* was now seen as a base to remobilise Zulu ethnic identity, to rebuild the Zulu nation.

3.1 The Life and Ministry of Isaiah Shembe

Born around 1870, Isaiah Shembe converted to the African Native Baptist Church. This was an Independent Church inspired by the missionary work of American Baptist groups in Natal. As a minister of the African Native Baptist Church Isaiah conducted faith-healing services and performed open-air baptisms. In 1911 a series of visions compelled Isaiah to go to mount *Nhlangakazi* in Zululand where he remained in prayer for days. During those days in prayer and trance he had a vision where he was given power to heal. From there he bought some land at *Ekuphakameni* and this land became a sacred centre for his people. In their regular worship the Nazarites performed daily morning and evening prayers, observed Saturday as a Sabbath, fasted before Communion and practised ritual foot washing for purity. They also observed a sacred calendar that revolved around the two annual feasts i.e. the Zulu festival held in Shembe's village at *Ekuphakameni* and the January festival at the holy mountain of *Nhlangakazi*, where worshippers retreated for two weeks of prayer. Members of this Church also observed certain prohibitions i.e. abstaining from pork, beer and tobacco and from any traditional or modern medicines. Chidester (1992) saw a great stress put by the Church on hard work. This new order was built on purity, discipline and labour.

“Isaiah Shembe was a prolific composer of hymns.” (Oosthuizen 1986: 133). These hymns that Isaiah composed employed the styles and rhythms of Zulu praise poetry, which was traditionally directed to royalty. In his hymns Isaiah invites his followers to join him in calling upon God “to pour in me the spirit of power (*umoya wamandla*)” (Oosthuizen 1986: 105). In Shembe Oosthuizen saw a talented person, who contributed a lot to worship through his music.

Shembe had received no formal education. He was, therefore, not a product of the European mission or school system. On the other hand, he claimed to have acquired a kind of sacred literacy through revelation. The government and mission authorities opposed the work of Isaiah Shembe in the 1920's and 30's. White missionaries and ministers complained that Shembe was under no European control. Such opposition to Shembe was ironic because he was not opposed to Whites and the White government. An example of his cordial disposition towards Whites is shown during the growth of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union during the 1920's. During this time Shembe instructed his followers not to join the union because it fought against the White government. It is ironic that the Whites opposed him while he did not want his followers to fight against the Whites.

3.2 Post-Christianity in Africa

In this section I will look at Oosthuizen's book *Post-Christianity in Africa*. By Post-Christianity he refers to the phenomenon of the African Independent Churches.

Oosthuizen saw some of the African Independent Churches as neither Christian nor belonging to the African Traditional Religion. For him they are like a new religion altogether. He states that “many form easy bridges back to nativism” (1968: xi). For Oosthuizen these people have moved away from the African Traditional Religion while they retain certain elements of it. They have on the other hand accepted Christianity while still holding on to some elements of the African Traditional Religion. This new reality is very much influenced by the traditional experience of the members. In these movements he noted a very strong emphasis on vital force. Their worship is full of life and vigour, and the expression of that joy is important for the life of these movements. Oosthuizen saw such an emphasis on vital force as making it difficult to accept the Cross, “unless it is magically interpreted” (1968: xii).

Oosthuizen saw the important role that is played by Shembe in the Church of the Nazarites. Shembe is crucial and he occupies a place that is normally occupied by a chief in the village. Oosthuizen makes this assertion because he sees in the Zulu world-view a hunger for realised revelation. In Shembe his followers can see and touch God. Oosthuizen classified the African Independent Churches into three categories, namely Churches, Christian sects and Nativistic Movements. He saw the first as a church because the Word, Sacrament and Church discipline of the new group are the same as that of the church from which they seceded. He calls the other group a Christian sect because the emphasis is on Jesus plus something else. That "something else" might be adult baptism for one group, the Sabbath for another and so on. Here the group or sect chooses what is important for them and they put that important element almost on par with Jesus. Oosthuizen saw this group as very literalistic and fundamentalistic in their interpretation of Scripture.

According to Oosthuizen the Nativistic Movements are fundamentalistic. Their main aim is to restore aspects of Traditional African Religion. He saw them as movements which are interested in divine involvement and not in the creation of the Universe. In many of the Independent Movements Oosthuizen saw something more than ordinary heresy or ordinary schism. He saw these movements as forming a new religion altogether. This is a new religion for him because the ancestors take a prominent place again. According to Oosthuizen the place of Christ in some churches is usurped by somebody else (like Shembe in the case of the Church of the Nazarites). The fact that somebody else is taking over the place of Christ is a refusal on the part of these movements to accept "the White Christ", in his view. In a Nativistic movement people get into a trance. The Zulu diviner gets into this state because of possession by ancestral spirits. The symptoms of ecstasy and shaking are practical proof of the authenticity of this experience. Oosthuizen calls these movements "a total reversion to the basic doctrines of the indigenous religion" (1968: 132). Such a reversion is caused, according to Oosthuizen, by the Church's failure to satisfy the needs of the indigenous people. These new movements now place a great emphasis on the spiritual aspects. This is mainly due to the traditional African background, of always seeking divine involvement.

Oosthuizen saw that action is basic to the African religion. For him this showed a desire for a religion which is vividly experienced. There is a demand for a very strong sensory experience. He maintains that the Old Testament is more misinterpreted than rejected in Africa. The great danger in

Africa is legalism. The law tends to be more emphasised than anything else and “salvation” is often based on the fact that one must not disobey the commandments of the decalogue” (1968:162).

The problem confronting the young churches in Africa is the misinterpretation of the Old Testament. A big challenge now facing the church is to make a thorough study of the Old Testament in the African context. The African interest in the Old Testament is due to the struggle of Israel for identity and freedom. Such an interest in this struggle of Israel had been extraordinary in Africa. This is because of the similarity of the African political experience with that of Israel. It is a result of such extraordinary interest in the struggle of the Israelites that Moses is seen by the Africans as greater than Abraham because of his political significance. From such a reading of the Old Testament Oosthuizen concludes that the Old Testament becomes a political source book, rather than a basis for the New Testament.

Oosthuizen maintains that when a person from the African Traditional Religion joins the Shembe Church this person is presented with no problem at all. There are no difficulties because the polygamist need not get rid of extra wives. Oosthuizen sees this church as a movement that is ethnocentric. For him a true church must be Christo-centric, otherwise it ceases to be a Church. He also notes that the priority of Jesus is excluded in the Shembe movement. The Zulu social system demands a living mediator, thus the dogma of “the black Christ” in the Shembe movement. The concept of the living mediator is very important in traditional African thinking, and that is why Oosthuizen says that in traditional African thinking “representation means identification” (1986: 36). When one stands in the place of another, he or she makes the other person present.

Shembe represents Jesus as the king represents the royal ancestry. Oosthuizen concludes by saying that the Shembe movement is a legalistic movement, based on a misinterpretation of the Old Testament.

Oosthuizen also looks at the way the Independent Movements are classified. He refers to the Pentecostal type and the Zionist type churches. He also deals with the role of the Holy Spirit and the Old Testament in the African Independent Churches. He goes on to analyse certain features of these Independent Churches like polygamy, sacred sites, water and the concept of sin. He gives attention to the ecclesiology and the Liturgy of these movements. Oosthuizen also looks at the way

theological training takes place in Africa. He is basically looking at the theological challenges facing the church in Africa because of the proliferation of the African Independent Churches. Oosthuizen makes an interesting observation that the main problem here is the Church itself. It is a problem because it is unrelated to Africa. The Church “is the main instrument in the growth of the movements, some of which develop into post-Christianity” (1968:xi). Oosthuizen’s attitudes towards the African Independent Churches is a good contribution to the knowledge of these movements.

“The traditional religious approach has made worship in the indigenous church context more existential” (1991:34). This is important because religion has to do with one’s various dimensions of existence. Oosthuizen saw religious activities as not merely set out but dynamic and related to specific needs of people. This can be seen in the African Independent Churches which are deeply involved in the needs and expectations of their members.

3.3 The Theology of a South African Messiah - Summary of his position :

In this book Oosthuizen looks at the different themes in the hymnal of the Shembe Church, called *Izihlabelelo*.^a He takes the themes from the hymns and analyses them.

3.3.1 Supreme Being :

In the first chapter of this book he analyses the concept of the Supreme Being. In explaining the concept of the Supreme being Oosthuizen uses the word *Umvelinqqangi*.^b He says *Umvelinqqangi* is the word used by the Zulu’s for the Supreme Being. *Umvelinqqangi* means first before all. In his analysis Oosthuizen found that the word Supreme being, as used by the Zulus, refers to the origins of God, being the first before all else. He saw the name of *Umvelinqqangi* as related to the Nazarites’ purification rites. He goes on to talk about *uNkulunkulu*.^c He sees *uNkulunkulu* as a lawgiver and this lawgiver is associated with ritual prohibitions. In the hymnal of the Nazarites God is also called

^a A Zulu word literally meaning songs. Here it refers to the Shembe hymnal

^b Literally means ‘first before all’. God is the first one before everything else.

^c God, the Great One, the Greatest.

“Immanuel”, God with us. Oosthuizen sees the term Immanuel as used by Shembe I^d to apply it to himself. Shembe I saw himself as the Immanuel because his main aim in the Shembe movement was the restoration of the Zulu nation. This study that Oosthuizen did on the hymnal of the Nazarite Church led him to conclude that Shembe I uses the title *uNkulunkulu* of the nation to refer to himself. He saw the reason for Shembe I to refer to himself as *uNkulunkulu* as stemming from the fact that each clan of the Zulus worship its own *uNkulunkulu*. The *uNkulunkulu* of the clan is preferred to the distant one. In this hymnal “*u Thixo*” is used several times. Oosthuizen saw the use of *uThixo* in the hymnal as an emphasis of the authority and acceptance of *uNkulunkulu*. He also noted Shembe’s use of the term *Simakade*.^e He saw this too as a term used by Shembe I to refer to himself. Shembe I would use *Simakade* to refer to himself, according to Oosthuizen, because Shembe I saw himself as a manifestation of the Supreme Being. Shembe makes the Supreme Being present here and now.

Oosthuizen saw Shembe II, the Son of Shembe I, as elevating Shembe I to the status of *Inkosi Yamakhosi* (King of Kings). This elevation is very important for it shows the prominence of the royal ancestors in the Zulu religion. Shembe I used the term “*uYise*” (Father) for the Supreme Being. Oosthuizen argues that “*uYise*” is not a specific Zulu designation for the Supreme Being. Oosthuizen saw Shembe I as using this term to mean the father of believers, the head of the Nazarite family, a term which emphasises blood relationships. When “*Baba*” (father) is used in the hymnal of the Nazarites Oosthuizen admits to the difficulty in discerning whether Shembe refers to himself or to the Supreme Being.

Another term that is used for the Supreme Being is “*Jehova*”. This term *Jehova* is used in the hymnal in association with the giving of the law to Moses. Oosthuizen here sees the Zulu mind as finding something similar to the giving of the law. He sees this as stemming from the fact that Shembe I had revelations through lightning. The Supreme Being is now *Jehova*, the Giver of the law, a designation for God as evidenced in Mount Sinai. Oosthuizen made a distinction between the *Jehova* of the law and the *Nkulunkulu* of the Missionaries. Oosthuizen states that Shembe is seen as a manifestation of *Jehova*.

^d Shembe I refers to the founder of the Nazarite Church. The first part of the hymn book was composed by Shembe I, the father of Sembe II

^e God the one who had been there since time immemorial

As he studied and analysed the hymnal of the Nazarite church Oosthuizen found that the interest of Shembe is not in the creation of the Universe but in the destiny of the human being. He sees this as a reason why Shembe hardly refers to *Umvelinqangi* and *umDali* (the Creator). Oosthuizen found out the reason why Shembe should refer to himself as the representative of God and thus the Christ of the Zulu nation. The reason for this is that the Jehova who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai and gave the law is this Supreme Being and, as history could be repeated, Shembe is His representative and thus the Christ of the Zulu nation. "Jesus Christ was a form of God's revelation but he has returned to the Father" (Oosthuizen 1967: 33). It follows therefore, that Shembe will come to take the place of Christ and continue the presence of God in the Zulu nation.

One of the main reasons for the formation of the Church of the Nazarites, according to Oosthuizen, is the Zulu's interest in the concrete involvement of God in their lives. Such a divine involvement has to take place through intermediaries, as it happens in the Zulu religion. In the pre-Christian Zulu way, the ancestors have always played the role of intermediaries. For the Zulu it was easy to see Shembe as an intermediary because the whole salvation history could repeat itself in the Zulu context. For Oosthuizen this emphasised and highlighted the hunger of the Zulu people for revelation most efficiently.

3.3.2 The Messiah :

Throughout his work on the hymnal of the Nazarites Oosthuizen maintains that the Messiah referred to in the hymnal is not Jesus but Shembe. The Supreme Being has sent Shembe to the Zulu people. He is the only one sent. According to Oosthuizen (1967: 40) this is shown in Hymn 77 :

<i>Kodwa mina ngedwa</i>	But I alone
<i>Ngivela kude;</i>	I come from afar
<i>Ngithunyelwe iNkosi</i>	I am sent by the <i>iNkosi</i>
<i>Phakathi kwenu.</i>	In your midst.

Oosthuizen saw Jesus as having some significance in the theology of Shembe. This was due to the fact that the Nazarites believe that Jesus promised the Holy Spirit. The reason for Jesus to promise

the Holy Spirit is that he was leaving the earth. He wants the Holy Spirit to remain with them, to be their comforter and to transform them. This is well illustrated in Hymn 109:

*Mangethwase Nkosi yami
Ngibemusha emoyeni,
Ngibafuze abangcwele
Abasebusweni bakho.*

Let me change, my *iNkosi*
That I may become new in *imoya*
so that I resemble the saints
who are before they face (1967:66).

Oosthuizen saw that the departure of Jesus challenged the Nazarites to find a substitute or a successor of Jesus. This was just a simple call to Shembe because a mediator is indispensable in such a system. This concept of a substitute for Jesus is what Oosthuizen calls “a divine Mediator within the Zulu society” (Oosthuizen 1967: 37). Such a call for a substitute resulted in Jesus being pushed to the background. This simply means that those who worship Jesus are the breakers of the law. Instead of worshipping Jehova they worship the Sunday-God. Oosthuizen saw Jesus’ emphasis on himself as being the Way, and Truth and the Life, as one of the reasons why Jesus was not accepted as the mediator. He states : “This is unacceptable to a society in which the emphasis is so strong on the communion of the saints” (1967: 38). Oosthuizen realised that for the Nazarites Jehova, Shembe and the law stand at the gate of heaven. He calls people into heaven and intercedes for them with God. In *Izihlabelelo* 60 Oosthuizen sees Shembe I as the Moses, not only of the Zulu nation but of Africa, and he intercedes for all people of Africa. Africa must therefore be happy because they have their own Moses at it is shown in Hymn 60:

*Wabakhumbula abantu bakhe
Abanqulu zisobala,
Wabathumela uIsiah Inceku yakhe
Ngoba elungile.*

He remembered his people
whose hips are naked
You sent them Isaiah your *iNceku*^f
because he is righteous. (1967: 45)

^f This refers to “servant”. Isaiah Shembe is seen as God’s servant. Isaiah is God’ servant sent to save the Zulu people

3.3.3 *'Umoya'*

Umoya is used in the hymnal of the Nazarites “to refer to a person’s personality, completeness, fullness”. It also refers to one’s spirit. Oosthuizen sees ‘*uMoya*’ as that which constitutes the vital force of the body. It also refers to “man’s ability to get beyond himself in order to receive the benefits of the supernatural powers” (Oosthuizen 1967: 60). When a person has *umoya* that person can come into contact with the ancestral world. That person can become a diviner. *Umoya* is used several times in the hymnal of the Nazarites. This led Oosthuizen to conclude that numinous power is very important for the Zulu people. He states that any religion which does not give numinous power is of no consequence to the Zulu people. For Shembe completeness means to be free from sickness, sin and embarrassment of different kinds. Oosthuizen sees in Shembe a close connection between the heart and *umoya*. The non-Christian Zulu would refer to a person’s *umoya* as the second heart (which might signify conscience).

Oosthuizen saw Shembe as making a distinction between “*Umoya*” and *Umphefumulo*. *Umphefumulo* means life, soul, or breath. He saw “*Umphefumulo*” as having something to do with personal salvation while *umoya* is more spiritually related to the numinous power and authority. Shembe saw *umphefumulo* as beyond one’s sphere and that is why it was pushed to the background by Shembe. The heart is the innermost of a person, the basis of a person’s spiritual life. Shembe saw the heart as the seat of *umoya*. The heart can also be the cause of *Umoya*’s suffering. Oosthuizen is surprised by the fact that Shembe I and II had very little to say about the Holy Spirit. The pre-Christian Zulu accepts a number of holy spirits like *amadlozi*, *amathongo*, *amakhosi*.⁸

The Holy Spirit is mentioned in Hymn 58 :

“ <i>Umoya wakho mauze Nkosi.</i>	Let your <i>umoya</i> come <i>Nkosi</i> .	
<i>ubaphilise abantu bakho.</i> ”	That it may heal your people	(1967: 91)

This hymn 58 is seen by Oosthuizen as a statement by Shembe that the promise of the Holy Spirit has not yet been fulfilled. Shembe was convinced that well-being and good health are dependent on the *umoya* of *Inkosi*. For Shembe the Holy Spirit is not co-equal with God. Oosthuizen mentions that

⁸ These Zulu words refer to ancestral spirits

Shembe saw himself as the manifestation of the Trinity. The few times that the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the hymnal of the Nazarites, Oosthuizen saw it as for the sole purpose of healing the sick.

3.3.4 The Sabbath

Oosthuizen saw the observance of the Sabbath as central to the *iBandla lama Nazaretha*. It is so important that the observance of the Sabbath is taken as the very key to salvation. Oosthuizen sees Shembe as not keeping with being the representative of Jesus on this issue. This is because of Jesus' attitude towards the Sabbath. Jesus' approach towards the Sabbath gave Shembe difficulties in his theology since Shembe could not accept that the law is no more the mediator between God and the people as was the case in the Old Testament. Jesus' approach to the Sabbath and to the law led to Shembe's doubt about the finality of Jesus and his work on the cross. For Oosthuizen the doubt that Shembe had about Jesus might be the reason why Shembe does not refer to Paul in his hymnal. For Paul the cross is the vital issue and Shembe could not accept that. Oosthuizen (1967: 111) states that "of the limited number of texts referred to, the largest number are from the Old Testament."

3.3.5 The Saints

In the hymnal of the Nazarite the word "*abangcwele*"^h is used to refer to the saints or the holy ones. Among the Nazarites the saints are not considered as isolated individuals. Shembe refers to the fellowship of the saints. Shembe sees these as including "all those who passed away, and who are accepted as holy ones." (1967: 78). Oosthuizen saw this understanding of the saints, holy ones or *abangcwele* as important for Shembe because the pre-Christian Zulu life had no meaning apart from ancestral presence and ancestral power: "The dead do not survive but take an active part in all mundane affairs" (1967: 80). Oosthuizen deduced from this that all the souls of the dead are active and are described as guardians over the living. Oosthuizen sees Shembe as referring to himself as the angel of the *iBandla lamaNazaretha*. Shembe speaks to God for the members of his church. Shembe would agree that a person has an angel and those angels function the same way as the saints.

^h A Zulu word referring to the holy ones or those who have been saved.

There is communion between the saints and the people here on earth. These two hosts form one community. Shembe used concepts like *iBandla* and *iramente* to refer to the community.¹

Oosthuizen accepts the difficulties in distinguishing which of the two communities Shembe is referring to when he uses concepts like *iBandla* and *iramente*. Oosthuizen sees these difficulties as caused by the intimate relationship between the two communities. One of the causes of this difficulty, according to Oosthuizen, is that Shembe does not think analytically but synthetically. All the experience of Shembe is reproduced in one great reality.

3.3.6 Holy Communion

Shembe's holy communion is unleavened bread and holy water. For Oosthuizen the fact that Shembe does not use wine as the blood of Jesus turns this sacrament into a purification rite. He, therefore, sees this holy communion in the light of the ritual meal of the first fruits ceremonies.^k This ceremony was an eating together with supernatural beings.

Oosthuizen looks at the role that is played by the cross in the theology of Shembe. He saw the cross as playing an insignificant role. The significance of the cross that Oosthuizen sees in the theology of Shembe is that through it sin is buried. It is a past event that removes sin from humanity. Sin was seen by Shembe as an offence against the law. It was difficult for Shembe to accept the traditional concept of the fall of the human being. "For Shembe the fall means that Adam had been driven out of Eden, out of a home, as it were" (1967: 123). The disposition to sin is for Shembe not of vital importance. That is the reason why motivation for sin does not feature in the hymnal of Shembe.

3.3.7 Baptism

This sacrament plays a central role in the church of the Nazarites. Oosthuizen saw baptism as an initiation into the community of the Nazarites. On the other hand, Oosthuizen notes that it is strange that Shembe refers to baptism *only once in his hymnal*.^l He makes the important point that baptism for Shembe is not once and for all like for many other churches. In the Nazarite Church a person is

¹ Refers to the congregation or when people gather together for worship.

^k This refers to the Nazarites annual gathering which coincides with the Zulu feast of thanksgiving for their crops.

^l In his hymns he refers to baptism as a purification rite.

baptised again and again when he/she feels unclean. This uncleanness might be caused by different kinds of defilements or failing to observe certain laws e.g. eating pork. The water used in Christian baptism is a sign of purification as it was in the Old Testament. This sacrament is central to the Nazarites and that is why one has to be baptised to belong to this church. This church attached much importance to adult baptism. Baptism is seen as indispensable to salvation. No one can be saved without being baptised. This baptism is seen as the washing away of sin through the magical effects of water. Oosthuizen sees Shembe's problem as his assertion that an element becomes a sacrament through the Word only and not through anyone or anything else. The sacrament does not give grace but it strengthens faith.

3.3.8 *Ekuphakameni*

Shembe's *Ekuphakameni* is seen as a place "where all nations should gather". On the other hand Oosthuizen states that the Nazarite Church is an ethnocentric movement. I asked Oosthuizen to explain the seeming contradiction between "all nations" and a nationalistic movement, and this was his response:

Initially I was under the impression that the *iBandla lamaNazaretha* was ethnocentric because their hymns, prayers, liturgical expressions were all in Zulu. However, when I worked more closely on a project quite a number of years ago I discovered that there are about seventeen percent of Xhosas among them. Of course, I am sure if one takes a sample which includes those in Gauteng and Mozambique the non-Zulu among them could be raised to about twenty percent (Oosthuizen 1998).

Oosthuizen sees *Ekuphakameni* as a place to which all nations are called. He says this because *Ekuphakameni* is an important place for the Nazarites. It is a place where all the Nazarites gather during the year for different festivals. Oosthuizen noted that according to the Zulu religion there is no *coming* of the kingdom. The kingdom is here and now. Such a concept of the realised eschaton finds perfect fulfilment in *Ekuphakameni*. Shembe believes in the resurrection of the dead. For Shembe *Ekuphakameni* is a visible presence of the saints. All the saints are actively associated with what is happening at *Ekuphakameni*. This, for Oosthuizen, is an emphasis on continuity rather than immortality. Continuity refers to the fact that the dead are alive at *Ekuphakameni* here and now,

while immortality refers to the fact that those who have died will rise one day to new life. This continuity is seen by Oosthuizen as coming from the Zulu religion. Those with *umoya* continue to exist through *ukubuyisa*.^m

3.4 Basic methodology of research

In this section I will analyse Oosthuizen's bias. I will analyse the way he approaches the phenomenon of the Nazarite Church, and see whether he approaches it as a theologian, an anthropological researcher or as one who is concerned with comparing religions.

Oosthuizen put a lot of effort into analysing the hymnal of the Church of the Nazarites. He studied the hymnal because he saw it as central to the life of the Church of the Nazarites. He saw the hymnal as a catechism of that church. In this book Oosthuizen found hymns, dance songs, particularly Zulu dance songs. Hymns are solemn, without much movement, whereas dance songs are full of life and motion. He discovered that the first eight pages are devoted to Morning Prayers. The next six pages are devoted to Evening Prayers. The following nine pages contain prayers of the Sabbath and an interpretation of the law. The rest of the book consists of songs. Oosthuizen saw these songs as remarkable for they reveal "depth in religious experience and a true understanding of the existential situation." (1967: 7). For Oosthuizen this was a clear sign of the understanding that Shembe had of his people. He also understood their needs, their anxieties, their hopes and their cries.

In his analysis Oosthuizen divided the hymnal into two sections. Hymns 1 to 219, was written by Shembe I. The second section hymn 223 to 243 was written by Shembe II. Oosthuizen saw that these hymns of Shembe II are less concentrated on the person of Shembe, as compared to those of Shembe I. The hymns of Shembe II reveal very different understanding of hell from Shembe I who sees hell as a literal den of fire.

Oosthuizen used Shembe's hymn book to understand the theology of this church. The hymns were translated from Zulu to English. He showed the relationship that exists between certain elements of the hymns and some traditional ways of life. This was important for Oosthuizen because he holds that the theology implied in the hymnal shaped that of the Shembe Church. This makes the whole

^m The ritual where the ancestral spirit is implored to come and protect the family.

analysis of the hymns significant. Oosthuizen took themes in the hymns and looked at their possible meanings. He looked at these themes from the background of the Zulu way of life. He also explained why certain terms are used in the hymn books. He then looked at terms used for the Supreme Being and explained them. He also explained the different approaches that members of this church have towards the Messiah. He then proceeded to show the connection between the human being and the supernatural world. This connection includes *uMoya*, the Soul, the Heart, the Saints, the Angels, the Messengers, the Royal shades, and the Holy Spirit. He then looked at the concept of the community, the way it is made up and elements that make up a community. He then gave attention to things that break up a community, like sin. At the end of his work he looks at the concept of Eschatology, how members of this church understand the Last Things.

3.5 Objectives of the research

Oosthuizen saw in the hymns of Shembe a summary of the teachings of the Church of the Nazarites. A thorough research into the hymns would help towards a better understanding of the Nazarite Church. It would also create/enhance a proper understanding of the rituals which take place during the service of the Nazarites. The hymn book is essential for the researcher to understand the teaching of the Nazarite Church. The point to note is that members of this church did not intend to make this hymn book a catechism. Oosthuizen saw all the theology of the Nazarites as flowing from the singing of the hymns. Such an exposition of this theology would assist in dispelling some misconceptions about the Nazarite Church and that would facilitate some interest in the Nazarite Church. A point to note is that Oosthuizen concentrates a lot on the teaching or the theology of the Church of the Nazarites. Such a concern says a lot about Oosthuizen's research interests which I will deal with in the next chapter.

In the preface of this book Oosthuizen acknowledged that the analysis of these hymns will reveal the complexity of how they came to flourish. Such a research will refute any oversimplification as unrealistic. The complexity of the hymns will be shown by their origin, their connection with the Zulu religion and the abundant depth of meaning that they carry.

Oosthuizen would attempt to show how remarkable these hymns are. He states that they are remarkable because they are not translations of hymns used in historical churches. This shows

originality and a certain talent on Shembe which deserves some study. Oosthuizen has a high esteem for Shembe and his hymns and that is why he states that “no other Zulu had in this century such a lasting influence on the Zulu people in particular than Shembe I” (1967: 7).

The theoretical framework of analysis and underlying commitments of Oosthuizen are that he wants to facilitate dialogue between the African Independent Churches and the historic church or mainline Churches. He states this very clearly in his introduction.:

“Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit has much to say to the mission and historic Churches through the Independent movements which should be approached with the modesty that is fitting in any dialogue. The churches have much more to learn from Shembe, and the sooner the superior and artificial attitude is discarded and a serious study made of the church’s own mistakes and theological superficialities, a dialogue will be possible even with the Independent movements.” (1967:10) He wants to counter typical prejudices and break down false impressions that are created between the mission churches and the African Independent Churches. Oosthuizen wants to do this for the African Independent Churches.

3.6 Criteria for analysis and evaluation

3.6.1 Attitude

Oosthuizen approaches the Church of the Nazarites with a positive attitude. This positive approach made him to look into the positive elements of the Zulu religion in the Nazarite Church. Taking the elements of the Zulu religion positively shows how they can enhance a positive approach to Christianity. Oosthuizen took the Zulu way of life seriously. He believed that the Zulu way of life can contribute to a better relationship between the Zulu people and their Supreme Being. Such an attitude encourages people to use their cultural practices in their worship and that helps to develop a wholistic approach to life. An example of this is Oosthuizen’s assertion that divine involvement among the Zulu’s has to take place through intermediaries, and hence the importance of Shembe taking the place of Jesus, as Jesus is no more here. He has returned to the Father. Such an intermediation is based on the Zulu’s belief in the ancestors and their indispensability.

3.6.2 Shembe and Christ

Oosthuizen saw Shembe developing into a Messiah. Shembe was essential for salvation. He stood at the door of heaven. All that Jesus was while still on earth, Shembe is to the Nazarites of today. Shembe is God-manifest. The movement of Shembe thus becomes Messianic. The Supreme Being was seen as manifested in Shembe. Oosthuizen saw this as a continuation of the Zulu belief that “as a child is the manifestation of the father so is Shembe the manifestation of the heavenly Father” (1967: 152).

3.6.3 Shembe and the Holy Spirit

Oosthuizen saw Shembe as accepting the role of the Holy Spirit in his movement. The only thing is that he explained it in his own way. Shembe believed that Jehova and himself could use the Spirit. They have control over the Spirit. Oosthuizen saw one of the reasons for the growth of the Shembe music and liturgy as the failure of Western liturgy to give to Shembe and his followers satisfaction. He saw the Western liturgy as lacking in rituals which expressed the African way of life. Their own worship became foreign to them. This led to Shembe starting his own hymns and liturgies. Such hymns and liturgies would involve body movements which assert the African people in making their worship lively.

3.6.4 Origins of the Shembe Church

Oosthuizen is strong in his assertion that the Nazarite Church did not originate, in the first instance, because of race. He asserts, however, that the issue of race did play a very important role in the formation of this Church. The “fountain of old” (1967:155), as Oosthuizen calls it, was revitalised in the context of the Nazarites. Here Oosthuizen refers to the Zulu pre-Christian religion, which was full of life, meaning and expression. This lack, in Western liturgy, made Shembe and his followers to look for an alternative way of expressing themselves.

3.7 Succession Conflict within the Church of the Nazarites

In this section I will look at the work of Oosthuizen entitled *Succession Conflict within the Church of the Nazarites*. I will also use the same structures as in the previous chapter to analyse this work.

3.7.1 Summary of his position in the book

The main purpose of this book is to look at the leadership in the Nazarite Church. Oosthuizen looks into the way a leader in this Church is succeeded by another, the criteria that are used in electing the new leadership and the implications that this has for the whole movement. Oosthuizen looks at Shembe's successors, how they were elected, the conflicts that arose from such elections and the divisions that resulted from that.

Oosthuizen (1981: 1) sees the main emphasis of the Church of the Nazarites as being "the restoration of the Zulu nation which had been disturbed as a result of its own violent reaction to the penetration of the Whites (both British and Boer) into Natal." There are New Testament scholars who claim that this was also the mission of Jesus: to restore the fallen nation of Israel. Jesus did this at the beginning of his public ministry. (Lk 4: 18-19). Shembe is trying to do exactly that. Shembe is seen as one who is interested in restoring his people to their previous glory. Oosthuizen states that Shembe believes that this would only be achieved through God's presence within the Zulu people. Such a presence could only be achieved in the same way as God revealed His presence with the people of Israel. Oosthuizen starts his work by giving the life history of Isaiah Shembe, his conversion, his contact with missionaries and his death. Oosthuizen mentions that Shembe founded his church with Mr. Mlangeni and Shembe was convinced about Saturday, the Old Testament Sabbath, as a special day for Jehovah. Shembe's belief was that only through the Sabbath can the Zulu nation be fully restored. Oosthuizen saw the reason for Shembe joining the African Baptist Church as being its indigenous character, its literalism in biblical exposition and the importance attached to adult baptism. Shembe's burning passion for the restoration of the Zulu nation can be seen in the leadership system of the Church of the Nazarites. Oosthuizen saw that in the Church of the Nazarites the leader is regarded as the king, surrounded by his chiefs, who are the pastors working with him.

Oosthuizen saw Shembe as a messianic figure for the Zulu nation. In order to be a credible leader in the Zulu society Shembe wanted to be connected with the Zulu royal family. This again highlights the importance of the king. He is seen as an important link with the supernatural world, a mystical-religious head, “a divine symbol of the Zulu people’s well-being” (1981:4). The king reflects and expresses the total unity of the present and the future, of what is here and what is to come. The king is the centre of the ritual of the nation. The king represents the whole nation. Oosthuizen saw the position of Isaiah Shembe along the same line as that of the king. The position of Isaiah Shembe has a lot of symbolic value. He is seen as the mediator between his followers and *Umvelinqangi*. Jesus would not be considered as a mediator in this context. This is because he does not belong to the line of kings of the Zulu nation by birth. He does not fall within the Zulu genealogy.

On 2 May 1935 Shembe I passed away. A serious crisis developed. Shembe I had 3 sons. Isaac Stanela Shembe, his first-born was to be the general heir according to Native Law. Shembe I, however, elected his second son Johannes Galilee who took over in July 1935. There was now a tension because some people within this movement wanted the first-born to be elected, as it is the custom with the election of a chief. Oosthuizen notes that the majority did abide by the decision of Shembe I. Johannes Galilee, a graduate from Fort Hare, became his successor. The real problem started when Shembe II (Galilee) died and did not appoint a successor.

Shembe II passed away in 1976. Two factions arose, one supporting Amos Shembe, the brother of Shembe II, and the other supporting Londa Shembe, the son of Shembe II. In 1977 Amos Shembe acted as titular head of the church. According to Oosthuizen, Amos claims he was officially appointed titular head by an overwhelming majority of members present at a meeting. Londa, on the other hand, claims he is the pastor of the Church and has been appointed titular head and trustee in terms of a certificate which was handed in to the court. Oosthuizen makes note of a violent incident in 1977 when a memorial service was held for the late Shembe II at *Ekuphakameni*, where a faction fight broke out and five people lost their lives. This incident worked for Londa, as his assertion was now backed up by a court interdict. This led to *Ekuphakameni* being divided into two. “There existed a great enmity and hostility between the two parties based on the opposite side of the road at *Ekuphakameni*” (1981:12) Eventually Londa occupied the main church building and Amos and his followers moved 10km away from *Ekuphakameni*.

The Supreme Court was granted the power and duty to appoint a trustee to a trust which had no trustees. The court suggested that the church nominates a trustee at the Annual General Meeting in 1977. Amos was appointed titular head and the court approved. King Zwelithini advised that Londa and Amos merge their supporters. The South African Council of Churches was called in. After a long inquiry it was found out that Shembe II did not recommend anyone for appointment as titular head.

The supporters of Amos believe that Johannes Galilee was still alive when he was found after his 15 - day disappearance. They believe that that was the time when he told Amos to take over after his death. What Oosthuizen calls "the exact truth", i.e. the manner in which Johannes Galilee died, will never be known. Some members of the Church saw this struggle as a period of trial, "a greed for power between Amos Shembe and Londa Shembe." (1981:50).

Oosthuizen had different views from different people on the solution of this conflict. He states that some people maintain that Amos and Londa should come together and lead the church jointly. Others maintain that the two leaders should go to *Nhlangakazi*, the mountain where the Nazarites meet twice a year for different feasts. There they can ask Isaiah and Galilee to give direction. Others feel that the Zulu monarch should give firm rulings and anyone causing trouble should be given a long term jail sentence. Some see Amos as the cause of the trouble. Some people believe that the solution is just to wait for Amos to die, as he is an older man, and then the problem would be solved. For some it seems that Amos has appointed a successor from among his own sons, and this might complicate the matter. Some believe that a white man will solve the problem, as this was revealed to them through a dream.

Oosthuizen saw a big emphasis of this church on majority. Even when Londa came with the affidavit, the majority could not accept him. Such a majority ruling stresses the fact that the Church should decide and not the individual.

Shembe I and II were important symbols for the Church and they occupied very important positions. The new leader who is to be elected has to share in the divinity of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Shembe I and Shembe II. "They (Shembe I and II) fulfilled the expectations of their flock because of

their strong and devout personalities. It will be difficult to find a person who will fully satisfy the members of this Church” (1981:69).

3.7.2 Basic Methodology of research

Oosthuizen has been in contact with the *iBandla lamaNazaretha* for two decades. Such a contact enabled him to share and analyse the life of this movement, not as an outsider but as one with inside knowledge. In his foreword he also alludes to a number of excellent studies which have been published on this Independent Church. One important point that Oosthuizen mentions is that this study is more of a legal issue. He looked at the different cases and affidavits. He quotes the Bantu Affairs Commissioner’s Court for the district of Inanda held at Verulam (case no. 23/1977). He refers to court interdicts, attorneys, the Supreme Court, the involvement of police at *Ekuphakameni*. An act was also promulgated in the Government Gazette by the Minister of Justice, prohibiting any public gatherings of this church in 1978.

In collecting this information Oosthuizen was assisted by Rev V. Mchunu. They conducted interviews among the Zulu people belonging to this movement. He was also assisted by Mr H. Myeni with interviews of the followers of both Amos and Londa Shembe. Oosthuizen also discussed the succession issue with members of this church. Oosthuizen gathered information about Johannes Galilee Shembe. He conducted interviews and visited respondents at their homes where he asked them questions about Johannes. The interviews that he conducted concerned the succession issue after the death of Shembe II. Most of his research was done by looking through the court cases of this succession issue, since this issue is more of a legal issue than anything else. In gathering information Oosthuizen got the testimony of the senior wife of Shembe II. He got the opinions of the members of this church. He conducted his interviews among different members of this church, namely, those who were members since birth and those who had joined the church later in life. When asking these questions, Oosthuizen started by asking the respondents whether they recognised Shembe I as the founder of the church. It was clear for Oosthuizen that they approached Shembe I with “great reverence” (1981:34). He then went on to ask separate questions on Johannes and then on Londa. Oosthuizen wanted to know how members of this church understand the position of Johannes and Londa, the interpretation of the leadership struggle and their death. His main concern is to know who should be the successor to Shembe II. Oosthuizen also asked the

respondents about a possible solution to this conflict and he deals with possible suggestions to the solution of this leadership struggle.

3.7.3. Objectives of research

In looking at the succession conflict Oosthuizen is highlighting the importance and value that is attached to this type of leadership by the Zulu nation. He notes that according to the Zulu world-view a leader or a king, shares in the divine life of the ancestors. He also wants to show the role that is played by the Zulu way of life in the church. By the mere fact that some members of this church wanted the traditional way of electing a king to be followed by the Church, is a clear sign of the important role that is played by tradition and custom in this church. A leader makes the Supreme Being present. When a leader is elected he or she plays a crucial role among the people. In that particular leader people find hope. If a leader is not properly elected that may result in the downfall of the movement. The Church of the Nazarites was divided into two factions because the procedures for electing a leader were not followed properly. The well-being of a movement depends upon the type of leadership that is experienced by that particular group. Shembe I was a charismatic leader and that is why the Church of the Nazarites was so united during his time. Members of this church did not believe that they could have a leader like Shembe I again. This research highlights how important leadership is in the African Independent Churches. A leader in the African Independent Church intercedes with the Supreme Being on behalf of members of the church. That leader would embody the aspirations of the members. Such a research also shows how the Zulu traditional way of life has shaped the life of this church. The leader of this church has to be elected in the same way that a Zulu chief is elected. The research shows how open this church is in using its customs and ways of life in shaping their worship. It is because of this openness on the part of the Church of the Nazarites that its members feel at home. They have a say in the way this church is run and are thus involved in the affairs of it. It is clear from the succession conflict that a leader in the African Independent Church occupies a place after the Supreme Being and the spirits.

CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION OF G. C. OOSTHUIZEN AS A RESEARCHER

In this chapter, I am going to evaluate Oosthuizen as a researcher. Of interest to me will be the actual methods he employs in his research. I will also look at the way he conducted his research, especially among the Zulu people, and the problems he might have encountered with the Zulu language. It is possible that Oosthuizen did not know the Zulu language.

In a questionnaire where I asked him if he speaks Zulu this is what Oosthuizen (1998) had to say:

I grew up among the Xhosas and my playmates were Xhosas. Later at University I took Zulu I and II - know the grammar but never spoke it. I spoke a little bit of Xhosa because my playmates were Xhosa children of my age. I was sixteen when I went to University, studied Zulu I and II but it did not help me very much because I did not speak it where I lived at the time. My interest in the African Independent Churches (AIC) started when I was a child. On the farm alongside ours was a Xhosa preacher of the AIC who preached regularly to his flock - "Yoyo" by name a big man with a beautiful black beard looking like the Old Testament prophets. Of course, the integrity of these fine people, their sincerity and devotion made a deep impression on me as well as on my parents

I also asked him whether the theology students who helped him to collect this data had a problem with the language. He replied (Oosthuizen 1998):

Yes, African students did help me on the basis of questionnaires to gather material; I also had a few fieldworkers to gather material on the basis of questionnaires. I always remained in close association with the fieldworkers and the people among whom this is being done. The students and other fieldworkers spoke the languages of the people among whom research was done - it was usually Xhosa, Zulu and some Sotho. They had to speak also to illiterates but seeing that the students were interviewing people who spoke their mother tongue, language was not a problem. The students knew how to approach illiterates who gave of the

best material and information. For the things of the heart and the mind illiteracy is not a problem. Well trained fieldworkers know how to approach people.

Some authors have commented on the research done by white missionaries on the African Independent Churches. I will evaluate Oosthuizen as a researcher against those comments. One of the comments was made by Maluleke (1996) which states that interest in the African Independent Church has always been a missionary pre-occupation. He says “in fact, by and large, interest in the African Independent Church studies has been very much a white male affair” . . . (1996:23). When looking at the reasons for this Maluleke notes that the movement was seen as “uneducated” and therefore a dangerous challenge to historic mission churches. Such a conclusion produces unhelpful attitudes towards the growth and well-being of the African Independent Churches. This is the reason why interest in the African Independent Churches was neither neutral nor sympathetic. Comments of many researchers on the African Independent Churches were scathing. Maluleke concludes that most of the African Independent Churches studies “were, in fact, not about the AICs but about the researchers and their churches” (1996:23). Maluleke goes on to say that the white African Independent Church scholars did not deem it necessary to conduct deliberate research into the separatist churches initially. Most of these churches broke from the mission churches and the researcher would be missionaries. Such researches would still be too emotionally involved in such a separation.

I asked whether he thought there were few black researchers doing empirical research among the AICs, and he replied (Oosthuizen 1998):

So few black researchers . . . most of the intelligentsia, and those ‘who have arrived’ i.e. those who think they are a cut above them, look down on them. I have often been advised not to do what I do because I give credence to them. Of course I was criticised by others that I misrepresented them but very few came to give us the correct ‘picture’ about them. This is a long story. I nevertheless continued because the AICs are more important than the few criticisms I had and most of which I closely analysed and on which I reacted positively. In fact, I really said little that was negative and then I emphasised that certain issues relate to a small minority only. I was prepared to revoke my criticism and which I did in many ways. Bengt Sundkler criticised me in ‘Zulu Zion’ but he keeps quiet about what he said in ‘Bantu

Prophets' namely that the AICs could and does lead some groups back to animism etc. etc. Of course, scholars on religion are not absolved from criticism. Furthermore, they also make mistakes.

Some black theologians say the AICs are a pet research subject for white theologians because the AICs do not address political issues openly or directly. I asked for Oosthuizen's comments and he responded:

This is also a good question. Of course the Ethiopian Churches were politically alert. The Ethiopians were represented at the ANNC (African Native National Congress) meeting in 1912. They played an important role. The AICs with the "Christian Catholic Church in Zion" background (established at Zion City, USA) and with the Apostolic Faith Church of the USA background (and which became the Apostolic Faith Mission in 1908 in South Africa) were quietistic on politics. And yet the province which has an enormous amount of ZCC's voted 92% for the ANC - that was the percentage vote of the whole province for the ANC. Yes, their youth were not so actively involved as the ANC youth but a reasonable number were active. Unfortunately, the apartheid era against which reaction was not only necessary but an obligation, had deep seated negative effects. The AIC youth tried to avoid this. I am grateful for what the youth has done in the struggle but I deeply regret the destruction of a considerable section of the youth as a result of the 'struggle'. The continuation of apartheid criminality which should have been stopped in the 1950's has brought destruction to young lives, unfortunately, and I am grateful that not more have been destroyed. There is a ±50 projects report on the youth and the struggle which is quite revealing entitled Youth in the New South Africa, HSRC Publication, 1994, 447 pages.

It is clear that Oosthuizen, as a researcher, is familiar with the background of the people he is working with. He knows their history and is in a better position to listen and to understand them.

4.1 Oral History

Oosthuizen wants the African Independent Churches to speak for themselves, and to be heard by the mainline Churches. This is well illustrated by the publication of his book *The story of Isaiah*

Shembe : History and Traditions centered on Ekuphameni and Mount Nhlankakazi (1996). This publication deals with the oral history of the *iBandla lamaNazaretha*. Oral history refers to reports on events by means of personal recollection. People narrate their own experience of historical events. Such memories are transmitted from one generation to another by word of mouth, hymns and praise songs. It is important to note that members of the *iBandla lamaNazaretha* do not come from a purely oral background. They use the Bible and they have hymn books but their thought patterns are shaped by their oral heritage. I see this as a remarkable piece of work because it realises the dream of Oosthuizen. For a long time he wanted the African Independent Churches to speak for themselves. Such a collection of oral history will allow the African Independent Churches to speak their minds out, without any modifications. When relating the history members of *iBandla lamaNazaretha* used to tell a story from experience. Such a way of telling a story is opposed to offering a sequence account of historical dates, facts and events. Members of this church witnessed the power of the Gospel in their lives. Such stories are powerful and meaningful because they are personal sharings. Such testimonies were given in public witnesses and evangelical outreaches. Such testimonies are important for the members of these churches. They are not simply stories of the past. They have an important theological meaning for our present times.

“Letting people speak for themselves“, however, can also be a problematic procedure. The views of the researcher does affect the way oral history is recorded. This can be seen in the way the researcher selects oral sources. The researcher will tend to select oral sources which are important to him or her. The language that the researcher uses in the presentation of oral history will reflect more the impressions of the researcher than those of the respondents. The researcher will also select which “testimonies” to record. These testimonies will go through many hands, and that definitely affects the type of testimonies the researcher will produce.

Oosthuizen’s big contribution towards this oral history was his work with NERMIC. I asked him what NERMIC is, who started it and what his role was in it. He replied (Oosthuizen 1998):

Nermic - an abbreviation for New Religious Movements and Independent/Indigenous Churches - has been founded in July 1984. The aim is to do empirical research mainly on the AICs. This is such a tremendous religious movement that one had no chance to get involved with research on, for example, the new religious movements among the Hindus etc. Nermic

started under the auspices of the University of Zululand, was attached to the Faculty of Theology with a committee of which Prof. M. Kitshoff was as dean of the faculty, chairman. I worked with fieldworkers and colleagues at the University of Natal (Durban) in various departments such as the Institute for Social and Economic Research and the Institute for Rural and Urban studies. To work with these colleagues and their fieldworkers was a wonderful experience. Much empirical research has been done. We spent much time in the townships and experienced the influx of people from the "homelands" as a result of Verwoerd's unintelligent approaches. Eight million impoverished people over a period of 12 to 15 years flocked to the cities of which Greater Durban received nearly two million.

4.2 Terminology

Hayes (1992: 139) talks about the terminology used to define the African Independent Churches. He maintains that the terminology used to describe the reality of the African Independent Churches may distort the study and impose a set of categories that can marginalise a number of African Christians. Hayes sees the defining characteristics of the category "African Independent Churches" as originating in the fear of the colonial officialdom. There was a fear and a suspicion of any movement which was not under European control. Given such a background it is clear that the definition given to such movements would tend to alienate them from their European counterparts. The fear of black political and religious independence made the definition of the "African Independent Churches" to be negative. According to Hayes the main motivation for studying the African Independent Churches was worry. He sees the white missionaries as worried about the growth of the African Independent Churches. Such a worry is displayed in the agenda of denominational and interdenominational mission conferences. They all had the African Independent Churches on their agendas. Even politicians saw the movement as a threat because of fear of political subversion or civil disobedience. Most of the theological arguments were very harsh on the African Independent Churches. Hayes refers to Sundkler saying that such movements become "the bridge over which Africans are brought back to the old heathenism from which they came" (1992: 143). Hayes believes that as long as the African Independent Churches are isolated and seen as a separate field we don't see the full picture. Their relation with other Christian bodies need to become more visible.

I wanted to find out from Oosthuizen what the appropriate term to describe the AIC's would be. He said (Oosthuizen 1998):

African Independent Churches are those which seceded from so called 'mainline' churches but kept most of the liturgy, hymnals, and general doctrines of these churches. Indigenous Churches are those which became contextualised with the situation in which it came in existence - here the indigenous culture becomes important. I usually write Independent /Indigenous Churches. 'Indigenous' is more than only 'Independent'. The St John's Apostolic Faith mission is for example an 'Independent' Church more than it is 'Indigenous'. The ZCC is "Independent' but more indigenous than the St John's AFM. 'Initiated' churches put the emphasis on an act which could easily be interpreted as 'Self Initiated' with the emphasis on the 'Self.

4.3 Fusion of two worlds

Kiernan (1995: 122) sees the fusion of African and Christian as producing a true synthesis. From such a fusion something new is created. He saw the phenomenon of the African Independent Churches as a refinement of Christianity in relation to African experience. The African Independent Churches provide intimate and supportive communities, give attention to healing in the face of urbanisation. Kiernan sees the African Independent Churches as self-contained and having a conservative outlook on life. For him they are concerned only about their own well-being and this makes them disinterested in matters political. This is shown by the important role of a prophet. For Kiernan the task of a Zionist prophet is two-fold, i.e. to diagnose the cause of a particular illness and to prescribe suitable treatment for the alleviation of the disorder. He saw churches like the *iBandla lamaNazaretha* as having quite a distinctive order of service. Such a movement originates from a displaced urban proletariat and it aims at serving the poor.

4.4 Procedures

In his study of Pentecostalism in the Indian community of Durban, Oosthuizen employed the same procedures as in his study of the Shembe Church. He started his studies by making acquaintances with the local community. After such initial contacts he went on to have visits and interviews with

the Indian Pentecostal Church. He then proceeded to conduct a fieldwork over a period of two and a half years. In that fieldwork he used one extensive questionnaire on the local culture and the Pentecostal Church. He also had one questionnaire on statistics. His method of collecting this data was to delegate the distribution of these questionnaires to a senior student. This senior student contacted different students and individuals in different churches to assist them in interviewing individual Pentecostal members, lay workers and pastors. Each questionnaire took 4-5 hours. Oosthuizen in turn conducted personal interviews with members and pastors of the Pentecostal church. Oosthuizen was invited to different services to speak, and through that participation he became acquainted with the life of some of the African Independent Churches. It is important to note that the key for Oosthuizen in such research was participation.

Oosthuizen was clear and consistent about his methods of collecting data. He summarises his method in three points, as found in Maluleke (1996:33). The first step in the collection data is the drawing up of an extensive questionnaire and the selection of field workers. The second step for Oosthuizen would be participation through observation. This step would help him to be familiar with whatever is going on in that community and to understand that situation better. After these steps Oosthuizen would start collecting the data and analyse written documents. Oosthuizen, as a researcher gives a reliable way of collecting data and analysing it. The collection and collation of data is very important because it affects the type of results the researcher is going to produce at the end of the study. An extensive questionnaire would help the different respondents to respond to the same reality. It is important to note that the extensive questionnaire should not be too long. If it is too long it might no longer be trustworthy because respondents will want to 'get it over with'. This works for the reliability of the responses given to the question. Oosthuizen selected fieldworkers. It is important to have certain criteria for one's fieldworkers. Oosthuizen, in this case, selected theology students. Such students were familiar with the topic at hand and they were aware about the process of such research. They were sensitive to what might contribute towards good research which implies, among other things, less influence of the fieldworkers.

In the different interviews conducted by Oosthuizen many ordinary members of the Pentecostal Church were interviewed. Although these ordinary members were interviewed it would seem that the pastors were the main target. Theological students were also interviewed. The environment where the interview takes place plays a major role in the type of response the interviewer gets from

the respondent. Most of the interviews done by Oosthuizen were done at home and at church services. Such familiar circumstances are conducive to reliable information. Oosthuizen had his assistants, fieldworkers. He was pleased about his assistants. Although there were cultural differences, Oosthuizen feels that they gave relevant information. It is essential that Oosthuizen notes that his assistants, in giving information did not try to please him. It is, therefore, clear according to Oosthuizen that the information gathered is reliable. Maluleke notes that Oosthuizen is very aware of the dangers of participation. Oosthuizen is aware that too much participation might be a hindrance to objectivity. One can be so involved in a particular situation that he/she becomes blind to the shortcomings of that situation. Oosthuizen approaches such research with a specific assumption. In this case his basic assumption was that Pentecostalism has the ability to give satisfaction to a specific socio-economic layer of people which Pentecostalism and Catholicism fail to give to the same extent (1996 :34)

Researchers say their aim is to make the sources speak for themselves. Maluleke states that their own views, those of the researchers, are actually drowning the sources. He says “the sources can speak for themselves only before we lay our hands, eyes and minds on them” (1996 :44). A good researcher is one who is aware of his/her own influence on the research findings. Such a researcher would restrict his/her own influence into the research and produce reliable results because of such an awareness. Oosthuizen is aware of the influence the researcher might have on the study. That is the reason why he had structured interviews, to allow for minimum interference by the researcher on the fieldworker. In his studies Oosthuizen was assisted by the type of interview he gave, to produce reliable results. An interesting point to observe would be the degree of participation he practised before embarking on the collection of data. A balanced participation would be a great help to reliable information.

I asked Oosthuizen whether his theological interests and preferences had any significant influence on this research and this was his response (Oosthuizen 1998):

Initially some of my theological dispositions and idiosyncrasies did have an effect - this is evident in the title of my first book *Post-Christianity in Africa*. But on the whole basically there is a great appreciation for these people with their “childlike”, genuine faith in what they believe. My theological disposition receded into the background because of a far more

holistic approach to religion as is evident in the AICs. The title of the book should have been "Post Western Christianity". Western Christianity whether it is the Scandinavian countries, the UK, Germany or France the church has become a "background affair" while with the AICs the church - although they have very few church buildings comparatively spoken - is a forefront, living phenomenon which is not conspicuous by its buildings but by its people and their activities. With the decline of the Church in the west another development is to be discerned in Africa namely the rapid rise of Africa's 'own' churches with a tremendously positive influence on a holistic basis. Among the AICs the church has a holistic disposition and impetus. My research among the AICs has helped me to see what Christianity means in essence for their adherents; its essential and existential value is for them so genuine and deep that the future of the church lies with them. This is why they increase and the so called 'mainline' churches which are no more in existential fact 'mainline' among the people, decrease at a rapid rate. The Catholics and Baptists lost only 5% since 1980 of their constituencies - the latter because they are so few and the Catholics because of the atmosphere their churches create for people who do not throw the deceased in a grave or burn the body and that finally breaks the link between the living and the dead. There is a sense of fellowship because there is a place for 'saints' which implies contact with those who were alive. It is not frowned upon in the AICs to return contact with those who passed on. This relationship upholds a sense of spirituality but over rationalised west churches are losing in droves their adherents. A funeral is merely - in many cases - dumping a corpse in a grave or with cremation throwing ashes in a bottle.

In gathering information for his research Oosthuizen is aware that his background can colour the outcome of the research. By being consistent with the steps in the collection of data, that helps Oosthuizen to have respondents responding to the same information. The exact and consistent steps that Oosthuizen employs in the gathering of information contributes to a good scientific analysis.

4.5 Language

Oosthuizen was disadvantaged because of the language barrier that existed between himself and Zulu people. This is a real handicap. It is very easy to get wrong information because of unreliable, out-of-context translations. He relied on other people to bring home the meaning of certain Zulu words

and that might bring a lot of doubtful information. From a such a barrier, although Oosthuizen practised participation, there is a big distance between Oosthuizen and the people he was researching. There is also a danger that the researcher might be the one who gets more from the research than the community she/he is researching. Such a researcher might be listening more to him/herself and his colleagues than to the respondents. Oosthuizen listened to the Zulu people and did allow them to speak for themselves. Oosthuizen went to their houses and services and was listening to them. Being aware of the role that his South African privileged background had on him, he tried to let that situation not hinder him. He did this through self awareness.

Maluleke maintains that “genuine humility and genuine modesty must inspire all theological research” (1996:42). Researchers must acknowledge their shortcomings in any research they do such as language, fear, racism etc. If a researcher is aware of his/her shortcomings it is possible to take practical steps to remedy the situation, like learning the language. Oosthuizen was aware of his shortcomings, especially the problem he had with the Zulu language. That is the reason why he got other people as his assistants in the collection and procession of data.

4.6 Commitment

Maluleke mentions that a researcher should make a life-long commitment to a particular research, and Oosthuizen did that. He was committed to the African Independent Churches. I asked him why he persisted all these years to study the African Independent Churches and what makes them interesting to him and this was his response (Oosthuizen 1998):

I have studied the Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Jains, Parsees here in Durban and the Christians among the Indians. I wrote two books - one on the person who established what became the largest church among Indians namely Pastor J F Rowlands who ‘founded’ the Full Gospel Church and the other book on the history of all the new churches among the Indian community (as I studied the ‘independent’ churches among the other community mentioned).

They are tremendously interesting - they are genuine, they are self-supporting, self-expanding etc. etc. They reveal much of the genius of the people of Africa when it comes to spiritual

matters; they are also of great examples of a great 'motto' ubuntu - self-supporting (they are not beggars and religiously not underlings); self-expanding . . . people come to them for what they do and what they are. I can write much more about this - but I have written on this elsewhere. They are also mainly Pentecostal as the AICs are to a large extent.

The most important thing in this life-long commitment is to fall in love with that particular community. Oosthuizen did a lot of work in the African Independent Churches. He looked at different aspects of these movements, in different countries, and he kept on researching. Oosthuizen did not do a once off project and leave it at that. He had a commitment to the African Independent Churches. Such a commitment gives the researcher wide information and the data that the researcher gets becomes quantitatively richer. When such a commitment to a particular community is lived out the researcher can be more able to distinguish between the tool used for the research and the data collected in the investigation. An example of this distinction would be the issue of race. It is very easy for a researcher to confuse the prejudice they have of a particular race with the result that they expect from a research project. A good researcher would be able to distinguish between their own prejudice and the impressions that they receive from the respondents. It helps the researcher to be aware of the possibility of "reading into" whatever the respondent is saying. When the data is unearthed in a research a researcher would be able to determine whether his/her attitude towards people of other races affected him/her so much as to cloud and overshadow the result of a particular project or that is the situation as perceived by that researcher and some of their colleagues.

4.7 Method of research

Mouton was interested in the methodology of social sciences. He sees social science research as "a collaborative human activity in which social reality is studied objectively with the aim of gaining a valid understanding of it" (1988:07). Mouton is concerned about the valid understanding of social reality. He is concerned about the planning and the execution of scientific research. Such an understanding of reality will be objective. Objectivity here does not mean "neutral" or universally valid. Mouton believes that objectivity is dependent upon the type or research being employed. Mouton sees the organisation with which the researcher is associated as a probable obstacle to obtaining reliable data. Such an organisation may result in the responses being biased. He saw the image of a researcher frequently as that of a stranger. In South Africa this is perpetuated by the

language and cultural differences. Such elements do contribute to the fact that white researchers are regarded as suspect by black participants. This also applies to Oosthuizen. He was a stranger to the different communities he worked in. Such a gap between himself and the participants might have contributed to the type of information that he received from the respondents. His participation in the community might have helped to overcome such a gap which might have been a big obstacle in the findings of his research.

There are elements which Mouton sees as contributing to a biased research: Racial effects, gender effects, status effects, urban-rural effects. Such elements might result in negative consequences in the context of observation. The temptation is for respondents to give responses which are favourable to the interviewer. Some interviewers might expect a uniform structure from the respondent and that might contribute to a great deal of bias.

For more reliable data, Mouton talks about neutrality and familiarity. These elements refer to the place where the interview is conducted. It can either be a home or a church. Whatever place is chosen for interviews there should be some degree of neutrality, familiarity, an environment which will not be threatening to the respondent. Such an environment would contribute to openness and trust.

Respondents find it difficult to supply information to interviewers on sensitive matters. It is thus essential to assure the respondent of anonymity. Oosthuizen in his works, does not mention the sources of his information. He does his work with different assistants and different respondents and the element of anonymity exists in his work. Doing this work in assured anonymity helps in extracting reliable data from the sources. Openness on certain issues is assured and a good rapport is now established. This makes for a good personal relationship with the respondent. Such an atmosphere helps to neutralise initial mistrust.

Mouton (1998:156) sees research as “a collaborative activity by means of which a given phenomenon in reality is studied in an objective manner, with a view to establishing a valid understanding of that phenomenon”. Through research scientific knowledge is gathered. It is a specific way of conducting an investigation. In a research many meaningful words, concepts, are used, which have to be defined and explained explicitly. This is important in making sure that

concepts do not have ambiguous meanings. A research also employs hypotheses, which are important guiding elements in a research. They are specific suppositions about the manner in which different phenomena are related. At the end of a research observations are made and the research has to determine the extent to which these observations were made under controlled conditions. Such observations help to establish a link between reality and their theoretical assumptions. Oosthuizen used different concepts in his work which pertain specifically to the phenomenon of the African Independent Church.

Oosthuizen, in his works, employed both qualitative and quantitative research. He used many questionnaires in the Shembe research. Mouton sees a qualitative researcher as one who “tends to become more involved with the phenomenon” (1988:163). Such a researcher is seen as opposed to a quantitative researcher. A quantitative researcher would be more inclined to impose a system upon a phenomenon. The structuring of the research, its control and scope will be different from that of a qualitative research. A qualitative research is relatively more open and broader in its tackling of problems. Oosthuizen was involved with his participants in his research. He lived with the respondents and tried to familiarise himself with their environment. Whenever a researcher tries to understand a situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the setting that researcher is on the way to allowing the data to speak for itself.

Holism is the assumption that the whole is greater than its component parts. This concept of holism acknowledges that the context is essential for understanding a situation. A researcher attempts to “understand a situation from the perspective of participants in the situation” (1998:204). In this way a qualitative researcher takes the context of the research seriously and this makes the research subjective. All individuals in a system are active agents in constructing and making sense of realities that they encounter. Such a researcher has to be committed to get close, to be factual and descriptive so as to represent participants in their own terms.

I asked him whether he considers himself an anthropological or a theological researcher and this was his response (Oosthuizen 1998):

I look at both anthropological and religious issues - I am not a theological researcher because the “logical” in ‘theological’ is a very narrow term. The westerner has so ‘theologicalised’

his religion that for example, Christianity is a dying issue in the UK and Europe. The precise attendance figure of the Anglican Church in the UK is one percent. Churches are closed by the thousands every year. One percent church attendance of the Anglican Church in England - church buildings are already closed by the thousands; in some cities churches rotate services for example the first Sunday of the month one church building is used for services; next Sunday in another area one service and so once in four Sundays a church service is held. In Berlin where I was teaching for a semester the average attendance was one percent; I was invited to a church which sent two missionaries to South Africa that church's attendance was the best in Berlin -(so the minister said) 3%. I could not believe it when I read a few years ago that in Italy ten thousand churches are closed annually. A few weeks ago a Norwegian Lutheran minister told me that he lives in an area in Oslo where there are fifteen thousand members of the Lutheran Church which has three hundred attenders on a Sunday - which means the attendance is half-a-percent. Of course fifteen thousand would not be able to go into one building but that there is only one building where such a huge number live - this also says much.

In contrast to all this we looked at the church attendance of the AICs - over eighty percent. The time spent in services varies from at least four to sixteen hours per week. They provide financially for their ministers - these are not subsidised. Their healing sessions are tremendously helpful in situations of stress; the ubuntu disposition is in essence what Jesus Christ taught about being responsible for one another in all respects.

Oosthuizen states that the hymnal of the Nazarites was used as a catechism for the Church. This is an important observation because it makes it easier to understand why Oosthuizen expects the hymnal to be full of this church's teaching. When Oosthuizen read this hymnal of the *iBandla lamaNazaretha* he was looking for the teaching of this Church. The theologian in Oosthuizen now comes out. This is shown by his interest in the dogma of the church. In his qualitative research he has now concentrated a lot on the theology and the teachings of the church. Because of Oosthuizen's background as a DRC minister it is understandable that his interests will be theological. The question can be asked why should the hymnal be a catechism? Shembe did not intend it to be a catechism. Oosthuizen calls it a catechism and therefore has many expectations and questions which this hymnal does not answer. Here Oosthuizen is asking theological questions.

Another example of Oosthuizen's theological interests taking over his cultural anthropological research is his observation that the *iBandla lamaNazaretha* does not have a biblical understanding of hell. He states that members of this Church understand hell as a literal den of fire. When a researcher goes into analysis a biblical understanding of hell such an analysis becomes simply and purely a theological statement. Oosthuizen gives a normative value judgement within theology. He even explains the different understandings that Isaiah and Londa had of hell. Social research refers to describing and comparing. When Oosthuizen starts judging, this becomes something else - and that is theology.

When analysing the *iBandla lama Nazaretha* Oosthuizen asks about orthodoxy and the teaching of the Church. Oosthuizen evaluates this church according to the triple criteria: teaching, preaching and Church discipline. Oosthuizen uses the Protestant criteria of defining a movement as a church. As a Protestant theologian Oosthuizen uses the highly specific criteria of Reformed Theology in judging the definition of a church. Later on Oosthuizen uses these criteria to prove that the Shembe Church is a valid church. Again he gives a theological value judgement.

Oosthuizen comments about baptism in the *Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha*. He says the word baptism appears only once in the hymnal. One can see a theological agenda again behind these questions. A question can be asked: Why do members of this church need to refer to baptism several times in their hymnal, when they see baptism performed almost every Saturday in the open-air? Members of this church see baptism and experience it in their daily lives. Is Oosthuizen asking them to change their hymnal into something that it is not? It seems that Oosthuizen is imposing categories on this church which both the leader and the members of this church are not concerned about. Whether baptism is written down or not, this is not an issue for the members of this church. Here again Oosthuizen's view of the hymnal as a catechism affects his interpretation of it.

In doing such a lot of work on the African Independent Churches in general Oosthuizen wants the African Independent Churches to be heard. He sounds a warning that the African Independent Churches should not be written off. Oosthuizen is in a way patronising the African Independent Churches. He wants to "write them up" in order to be heard by the Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists and other mainline churches. I would see Oosthuizen as patronising the African

Independent Churches and, on the other hand, overcoming a class bias that already exists between the African Independent Churches and the mainline churches. My concern is why should Oosthuizen speak up for the African Independent Churches? Oosthuizen wants the African Independent Churches to be heard. It is possible that the African Independent Churches are content with themselves, their worship, their healing, their sense of belonging. It is possible that they don't want to be heard by anybody. Wanting to be heard by the mainline churches can imply a hidden theological agenda. If the African Independent Churches are to be heard properly (which implies acceptance) they would have to adjust their theological framework to suit those who must accept them. In this way the theological interests of Oosthuizen come to the fore.

Oosthuizen also encouraged the collection of the oral history of the *iBandla lamaNazaretha*. Such a collection is, in a way, the *iBandla lamaNazaretha* speaking for itself. The issue is why should the African Independent churches be heard by the mainline churches. This question of "being heard" is an ideological question. This path that is taken by Oosthuizen can result in the African Independent Churches changing into something else just because they want to be heard. A case can be made out for Oosthuizen. One can point out that being Christian his movement belongs to a wider community. No one can be a Christian on one's own. This movement (the African Independent Churches) can contribute to the world-wide Christian community. The African Independent Churches need to listen to the other Christian movements. Being Christian necessarily implies being catholic. In this definition is embedded also an element of accountability. Such movements belong to a long tradition of handing down the Word to the present generation. The *iBandla lamaNazaretha* is a nationalistic movement, with an element of accountability mainly to the Zulu people. They also do contribute to the world-wide Christian community. They are part of the interfaith movement in Durban. The Christianity or the Word that is used by the Shembe church is handed down to them by missionaries. The Nazarites did not start Christianity by themselves. This message is apostolic. All these movements belong to the same apostolic tradition, therefore to the same Christianity.

In 1967 Oosthuizen saw the *iBandla lamaNazaretha* as post-Christian. He quotes from the *Ecunews Bulletin* of March 24, 1976, which says this about the *iBandla lamaNazaretha* "They argue vigorously that Christ fulfills the role of mediating for 'his own people', the Jews . . . How can Christ, a White man from another country intercede for me when he hardly understands my

problems and culture?" (1977: 82). Oosthuizen sees the Shembe Church as a valid church. The only thing that makes them post-Christian is their non-acceptance of the mediating role of Jesus.

Rev. E. Ngobese did a study on the concept of the Trinity in the Church of the Nazarites. He arrived at the conclusion that the Church of the Nazarites is a Christian Church. Even Sundkler who in his book *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, spoke of the Church of the Nazarites as a messianic movement, changed his statement in "Zulu Zion". He introduces the term "Iconic Churches". By Iconic churches Sundkler refers to those churches "where the leader represents God to the people, in the same way as believers in the Orthodox Churches find a divine presence in the icons which are painted by pious Christians during prayer and meditation" (1992:41)

Oosthuizen wrote a book review of M.L. Daneel's book *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches. Vol. 1 Background and rise of the major movement*. Oosthuizen looked at the way Daneel collected information in his research. Daneel knew the Shona people and their language. Through "participant observation" he got into the thought pattern of the Shona people. Oosthuizen sees this method, participant observation, as the only meaningful method of knowing the "thought climate" of people. (1973: 185)

In his book review of "The Healer - Prophet in Afro-Christian Churches" Oosthuizen examines the role, place and significance of the office of the healer-prophet in African Independent Churches. This book consists of seven chapters and it is a product of Oosthuizen's empirical studies on the prophets and their activities. Maluleke states in his review that Oosthuizen sees the healing ministry of the African Independent Churches as a corrective to the healing ministry "vacuum" in the historical churches. The African Independent Churches emphasise the individual aspect of sin as one of the causes of disease. In the second chapter Oosthuizen discusses the call of the African Independent Churches healer. In chapter three Oosthuizen discusses the healing methods of the healer. Chapter four deals with the traditional African explanation and treatment of disease. Chapter five deals with the subversive character of African Independent Churches. Chapter six deals with the Christian ritual of baptism in the light of the African context. The last chapter confronts the question of the similarities between the divine and the African Independent Churches prophet.

Maluleke believes that the research on the African Independent Churches is still by and large confined to White missionaries and academics. He sees blacks as presently playing the fieldwork role. An observation that Maluleke makes is that Oosthuizen does not mention his black fieldworkers by name in this book. He sees a serious shortcoming in Oosthuizen that he does not engage contemporary theologies and theologians in this African Independent Church debate. This for Maluleke shows the arrogance of White missionary academics “who have laid exclusive claims of the African Independent Churches phenomenon in the guise of so-called empirical research” (1993: 191). A dialogue between Oosthuizen’s research on the African Independent Churches with Black and African Theologians would give a fuller picture of the African Independent Churches.

Maluleke sees Oosthuizen as viewing the African Independent Church in “ecclesiastical reactionary terms” (1993: 191). Maluleke refers to Oosthuizen’s assertion that the African Independent Churches react and respond to a “vacuum” or a neglect by the historic churches. Oosthuizen is referring to healing and the African Independent Church’s healing ministry. Maluleke asserts that the healing ministry of the African Independent Churches is more than a reaction. “The African Independent Churches are not merely a result of the mistakes and omissions of the so-called historic churches. More than a reaction they are African initiatives” (1993: 191). Maluleke does not believe that it is fair to use “traditional Africa” only to assess the African Independent Churches praxis. Maluleke believes that Oosthuizen should have used yardsticks like modernity, urbanisation, the landmines of Apartheid laws, socio-economic and political deprivation etc. Maluleke states that the “traditional Africa” of Oosthuizen is neither an empirical element of his study nor the product of it. It is an ideological framework of choice. I see Maluleke as overreacting. The African Independent Churches came as a result of a lack of fulfillment in the western way of worship. It is precisely because of a lack of fulfillment that the African Independent Churches started to be formed.

Oosthuizen in his review of Daneel’s bookⁿ, sees Daneel as having a positive approach towards secession. For Daneel secession does not imply the “disruption of the Body of Christ” (1990: 76). It is a natural traditional process. Such a secession as experienced in South Africa, with its over four thousand African Independent Church denominations is the African initiated version of the Reformation of the Church in Africa. Oosthuizen agrees with Daneel. It is through this secession that there is so much growth.

ⁿ Old and New in Southern Shona Churches: Leadership and Fission Dynamics, Vol III, 1988 (Gweru: Mambo Press)

Conclusion

There is a shift in Oosthuizen's approach to the African Independent Churches. When asked about this "conversion" from being negative to gradually becoming positive towards this Church this is what he had to say (Oosthuizen 1998):

With regard to my earlier work I made critical remarks on some aspects of the AICs. This does not mean that I was negative towards the AICs as such. Of course it was stupid to entitle a book on the AICs with a title such as "Post-Christianity in Africa". When one reads the book it clearly states that only some AICs are "post-Christian" i.e. that some made contact with Christianity but remained basically traditional. I think this book helped many with regard to the publications referred to as much of the material were unknown in wider circles. Kwesi Dickson, an earlier New Testament scholar from Ghana thanked me for the many issues which became clearer to him through "Post-Christianity". I had a number of such reactions even from an outstanding person as Prof Bediako. My greatest critic was Prof Bengt Sundkler in his book entitled "Zulu Zion" but he himself stated in his "Bantu Prophets" that AICs could lead black people back to the traditional religious dispositions. I never responded which is not typical of my nature. Christopher Hurst who published Post-Christianity said that he sold five thousand copies to Eerdmans, a bookseller in the USA. Prof Kwesi Dickson, a noted New Testament scholar from Accra, Ghana, embraced me when he met me. He maintained it helped him to understand more clearly some of the issues he struggled with. I was told that many in West Africa duplicated the book as it was out of print. Of course, there are a number of things that I would like to change but not the bulk of the book. I stand by many of the things I wrote but I am grieved by some the the things stated in the book.

The more I came in touch with the AICs the more I appreciated them. They are the cream of Christianity in the country in spite of the strange things some of them do. They do not have a subsidised Christianity - they have too much self-respect for that. They have grown at a tremendous pace during the last few decades. Why? No organisation helped the impoverished people during the last few decades as they did. On this I did research with

sociologists, anthropologists and others who were amazed to see what they do for each other. We have published on this and so did Prof Dons Kritzinger also. Their youth is stable and sensible and not like some outside the context of the AICs. (Read *Youth in the New South Africa* edited by F. van Zyl Slabbert, C. Malan etc. publ. by HSRC 1994, 447pp. A publication based on nearly fifty intensive projects country wide). Apartheid led to the motto "liberation before education" which enhanced a culture of destruction and which will take time and effort to eradicate.

Schreiter mentions that "being a theologian is a gift, requiring a sensitivity to the context, an extraordinary capacity to listen, and an immersion in the Scripture and the experience of other churches" (1985:18). It is important that a community has an experience of an outsider as a theologian, otherwise the local church runs the risk of turning in on itself, becoming self-satisfied with its achievements. Schreiter gives a sobering thought in "Constructing" local theologies. The process of constructing local theologies begins with a study of the churches, rather than with possible translations of the larger church tradition into the local circumstances. The guiding principle would be finding Christ in the situation rather than trying to bring Christ into that particular situation "Any local theology that is truly Christian has to be engaged with the traditions however a church might understand that tradition: the Scripture, great conciliar and confessional statements, the magisterium. Without that engagement, there is no guarantee of being part of the Christian heritage" (1985:95).

The growing appeal of the African Independent Churches focuses the issues of the importance of African traditional culture. For many years typical missionary and anthropological literature has presented African religion in a negative manner. This resulted in Western theological constraints and ecclesiastical models being imposed on South African Christians. One can only admire the deep devotion of Oosthuizen to do research on the African Independent Churches.

From the foregoing study I have looked at the life and ministry of Oosthuizen, his background, his education and how he came to be involved with the African Independent Churches. His education at the Free University in Amsterdam and his experience as a chaplain in the army opened up his mind and helped him to start thinking and analysing theology. I have looked at the way Oosthuizen presents Shembe I, the man, his life and the important role Shembe played in the founding of the

Nazarite Church. In his book *Post-Christianity in Africa*, Oosthuizen has accepted the Nazarite Church as a valid church. The only difficulty he had with this church is the way Shembe understood his mediating role. Oosthuizen sees Shembe's understanding of his mediating role as rejecting the role of Jesus as Mediator. I also looked at Oosthuizen's book, *The Theology of a South African Messiah - an Analysis of the Hymnal of the Church of the Nazarite*. In this book Oosthuizen looks at the different themes found in the hymns and analysed them. I have looked at the way the research into the hymns of the Nazarites was done. I looked also at Oosthuizen's book, *Succession Conflict within the Church of the Nazarites*, the main points in this work and how Oosthuizen collated the data for this research. I looked at what prompted Oosthuizen to do this research on the Church of the Nazarites. I analysed Oosthuizen as a researcher, his role in the oral history of this church, the terminology he uses in describing this phenomenon, the procedures he employed in gathering information, the language barrier and the commitment that Oosthuizen has demonstrated towards the African Independent Churches in general, and to the Shembe Church in particular. I also analysed his methods of research.

Oosthuizen does not gather the harvest at the expense of others. He is primarily an empirical researcher. He is, above all, a grassroot researcher. His ears and eyes are on the ground. He goes to the people to learn about their identity and their situation. On the other hand he does not hesitate to address or to point out the real problems facing humanity. He has constantly rejected the idea of "a pie in the sky". He often lauded the African Independent Churches for their relevant involvement in the issues and the needs of the day, while criticising the "mainline" churches for too often spiritualising or misusing religion. The work of Oosthuizen shows that religion which is relevant should manifest its relevance. He is essentially a scholar of religion, although his theological interests do take over sometimes. His work has contributed to the understanding and appreciation of the wealth that is found in the experiences of the members of the African Independent Churches.

List of References Cited

- BECKER, H.J. 1965. The Nazareth Baptist Church of Shembe, An Approach to Independent Church Movement in South Africa. Durban : Lutheran College. p.101-114.
- BOSCH, D.J. 1991. Transforming Mission :Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission , Maryknoll : Orbis Books.
- CHIDESTER, D. 1992. Religions of South Africa, London : Routledge.
- DANEEL, M.L. 1987. Quest for Belonging, Gweru : Mambo Press.
- DANEEL, M.L. 1971. Old and new in Southern Shona Independent Churches : Vol 1 The Hague : Mouton
- de VILLIERS, P.G (ed) 1987. Like a roaring lion; Pretoria : UNISA.
- HEXHAM, I. & Oosthuizen, G.C. (ed) 1996. The Story of Isaiah Shembe: History and traditions centred on Ekuphakameni and Mount Nhlankakazi, USA : Edwin Mellen Press.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1967. Theology of a South African Messiah Leiden : Brill.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1968. Post-Christianity in Africa: A theological and anthropological study London : C Hurst.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C 1981 Succession Conflict within the Church of the Nazarites, Durban : University of Durban-Westville.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1985. Baptism in the context of the African Indigenous/Independent Churches Kwa Dlangezwa : University of Zululand.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1985. Testimonium, Vol 3, No 1, 19-28.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. (ed). 1986 . Religion Alive Cape Town : Hodder and Stoughton.
- OOSTHUIZEN, C.G. 1987. The birth of Christian Zionism in S.A. Kwa Dlangezwa : University of Zululand.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1991. Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots in Southern Africa, USA : Edwin Mellen Press.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1992 . Empirical studies of African Independent / Indigenous Churches. New York : Edwin Mellen Press.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1994. Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots : its dynamics and strategies. New York : Brill.
- PILLAY, G.J. (ed) 1992. Religion and the Future, Pretoria : HSRC.

- PROZESKY, M. & de CRUCHY, J. 1995. Living faiths in South Africa, New York : St. Martin .
- SCHREITER, R.J. 1985. Constructing local Theologies, London : SCM Press.
- SUNDKLER, B.G.M. 1961. Bantu Prophets in SA Oxford : Oxford.
- THOMPSON, J 1988. Shembe Mismanaged?, Vol 1, 185-196.
- VILAKAZI, A. 1986. Shembe: The revitalisation of African Society Johannesburg : Skotaville.
- WOLANIN, A. 1996. Omnis Terra, No 271, 321-330.

Journals & Periodicals

- BECKER, H.J. 1978. Ekuohakameni Revisited (Recent developments within the Nazaretha Church in South Africa) Journal of Religion in Africa, Vol 9, No 3, 161-172.
- DANEEL, M.L. 1993. Pneumatology and the Salvation of all creation. International Review of Mission, Vol 82, No 326, April, 143-166.
- HAYES, S. 1992. The African Independent Churches: Judgement through terminology? Missionalia, Vol 20, No 1, April, 139-146.
- MALULEKE, T.S. 1996. Research methods in AICs and other Grass-root Communities. Journal of Black Theology in South Africa, Vol 10, No 1, May, 18-48.
- MALULEKE, T.S. 1997. Half a century of African Christian theologies: Elements of the emerging agenda for the twenty-first century. Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, No. 99, Nov., 4-23.
- MAIMELA, S.C. 1985. Salvation in African Traditional Religions. Missionalia Vol 13, No 2, April, 63-77.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1968. Isaiah Shembe and the Zulu world-view. History of Religions, Vol 8, August, 1-30.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1982. Encountering a Pluralistic World. Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, No 41, December, 32-35.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1987. Conference on African Indigenous Churches. Missionalia, Vol 15, No 1, April, 134-135.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1988. Interpretation of Demonic Powers in Southern African Independent Churches. Missiology - An International Review, Vol 16, No 1, January, 3-22.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1992. Southern African Independent Churches respond to Demonic Powers Evangelical Review of Theology, Vol 16, No 1, January, 414-434.

- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1993. The Healer-Prophet in Afro-Christian Churches. Missionalia, Vol 21, No 1, April, 190-191.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1996. Afro-Christian Religion at the Grassroots in Southern Africa. Missiology Vol 24, No 4, October, 537-538.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1997. Indigenous Christianity and the future of the Church in Southern Africa. International Bulletin, Vol 21, No 1, January, 8-12.
- OOSTHUIZEN, G.C. 1998. Interviews.
- SAAYMAN, W 1994. Christian Mission in South Africa: a Historical Reflection. International Review of Mission, Vol 53, No 328, January, 11-19.
- TURNER, H.W. 1970. The Theology of a South African Messiah. An analysis of the hymnal of "the Nazarites". Review, Vol 3, No 1, 154-156.