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CONVERSION, CRISIS, AND GROWTH:

The Religious Management of Change within the St John's
Apostolic Faith Mission and the Reformed Presbyterian
Church in Cape Town, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This thesis defines conversion as a process of change management. Individuals and groups mobilise resources and formulate strategies for individual identity and group formation. Strategies are also formulated to manage the process of change for members. In the research done among two churches, one conventionally classified as African indigenous and the other classified as mainline, two models of conversion emerged, the crisis model at St John's and the growth model at the Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPCSA). In the crisis model individuals join the group because of some crisis in their lives, e.g., illness or misfortune. The healing practices and rituals serve to manage and mediate the crisis for individuals. Healing is at the heart of the recruitment strategy at St John's and other African Indigenous Churches (AICs). It is through hearing about the efficacy of the healing powers of the leader that people are attracted to the church. On the other hand, the growth model as represented by the RPCSA, is about organic growth and development where new members are mostly recruited among the children of members. Children are groomed from baptism through Sunday school and confirmation classes to membership in full communion. For them conversion is a process of growth and development, where they keep on learning all the time about their faith and who they are.

In scholarship the AICs have always been treated ethnographically while, on the other hand, the mainline churches have been treated historically. However, this thesis is a comparative study of the AIC and a mainline church with a special emphasis on their conceptions of conversion.

The two churches are both African and Christian. They each draw from both these resources for self-definition. Christianity has become part of the South African religious landscape. None of the members in the two churches consider it as an alien or foreign religion but they consider it as an indigenous one. The two models mobilise resources and formulate strategies for self-definition and what it means to be human in a hostile environment.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of the present study

The present study is aimed at exposing the inadequacies of the divide between the mainline or missionary churches and the African independent or indigenous churches by looking at how they perceive the process of conversion. Conversion is a complex concept which different faith communities interpret differently. For this study, conversion is defined as both a process of change and the ways in which that process is managed. Each of the two faith communities has a set of strategies of managing the process. Change does not happen in a vacuum, but it takes place within a certain context within which there is a complexity of factors that influence the direction of change for both individuals and groups.

Considerable research has been done in this area but it has concentrated on how different the AICs are from the mainline churches. The tendency to concentrate on the differences has magnified the differences between the two entities. The AICs have always been treated ethnographically while the mission churches were treated historically. The AICs ended up being perceived as exotica. Ranger suggested that "it is time that social historians, anthropologists, and even theologians to become more interested in

the inner history of the churches of mission provenance. ... we should see mission churches as much less alien and independent churches as much less 'African' than has hitherto been the case". This suggestion means that scholars should investigate the mysteries of the mission churches with the same energy as they did those of the AICs. The two churches must receive the same treatment in scholarship. However, this thesis is a comparative study of two churches, one classified as mainline and other classified as AIC, paying special attention to their resources and strategies for managing change.

Research for the present study was done in the St John's Faith Mission, which is conventionally classified as an African indigenous church, and Reformed Presbyterian Church (formerly known as Bantu Presbyterian Church), which is conventionally classified as a mainline or mission church. The two churches are in KTC and Gugulethu respectively. The St John's group was based in Gugulethu from its founding until the founder was allocated a plot in the informal settlement to the east of Gugulethu called KTC. Gugulethu is a black township in Cape Town. The religious profile of the community: there are those who belong to the mainline or missionary Christianity, believers in African Religion and those who belong to the African indigenous churches. Christianity is an important part of the religious landscape of Gugulethu; the number of church buildings, churches and membership in those churches demonstrates this. Even events

that are supposed to be traditional, e.g., ancestral rituals and initiation ceremonies have appropriated some elements of Christianity. It has become part of the identity of the people of Gugulethu and KTC.

2. Why people change

Change is a complex process that is influenced by various factors. Most of the early studies on new religious movements subscribed to the theory of relative deprivation. Change was explained in terms of feelings of deprivation in comparison to their fellow community members. The application and development of the theory of relative deprivation in the study of religious change was pioneered by sociologist Charles Glock. He asserted that relative deprivation is not only economic deprivation but there are other forms, namely, social, organic, ethical, and psychic. These forms of deprivation apply to all people, rich or poor. Religious groups arise as a response to one or more of these forms of deprivation. *Economic deprivation* involves differentiation in income distribution. A lower income earner would feel deprived relative to a higher income earner. *Social deprivation* is about "society's propensity to value some attributes of individuals and groups more highly than others" (Nelson, 1987:87). An individual who possesses fewer of these valuable attributes has a lower status, which leads to feelings of relative deprivation when compared to others who possess more. *Organismic deprivation* is about individuals with physical or mental deformities or other stigmatising or disabling traits.

Such persons would not have access to certain facilities, which the others take for granted. *Ethical deprivation* is when there is conflict of value systems and ideas between society and the individual or group. In such cases groups see themselves as representing an ethical alternative, the source of moral and ethical regeneration and would not want anything to do with society's general deprivation. Lastly, *psychic deprivation* is when individuals do not have a meaningful system of values. For Glock any of the above forms of deprivation are enough to influence someone to change their religious affiliation (Glock, 1964).

There is a gap between what people are and what they believe they should be. When they take action and become part of an alternative group, they want to use the mobilised resources of the group to compensate for that, which is desired but cannot be had. Stark and Bainbridge (1985, 1987) understand religion as a system of supernatural compensators. And as such,

People whose suffering comes simply from relative economic deprivation need the rewards that prosperous people in their society already possess. But they are forced to accept specific compensators instead. Those compensators will be most effective when they directly challenge the status of the upper classes that they can most effectively do if they are deeply rooted in the same religious tradition that the prosperous people themselves accept. (Bainbridge, 1997:165)

In such a case compensation would be the use of scriptures to undermine the riches held by fellow community members. The most important message for the group would be spiritual richness and that holds rewards for the believer in the year after.

In South Africa the AICs are largely made up of poor people who were disenfranchised for a long time. They underwent different forms of suffering under the white regime governments. According to Glenda Kruss (1986:21) "[t]he first dominant explanation of independent churches is that they are a reaction to conquest". In other words, AICs were a response to the socio-economic and political situation in South Africa. Their symbolism and practice was a subversion of the norm. They appropriated and subverted important Christian symbols. Their ritual practice, especially healing, was seen as a major indication of resistance to white or western institutions, and the system of apartheid in particular (Thomas, 1994, 1997, 1999).

It is no longer enough to say that these churches emerged as a response to their situation of being subjugated, and that they were ways of coping in a difficult time. Such methods pay more attention to the impact of social structures than human agency. That context is very important, but one has to go beyond that and acknowledge the creativity and innovativeness of the AICs. A more helpful explanatory approach is found in resource mobilisation theory. Since Africans were subjugated and dehumanised, their reaction was to find

alternative ways of affirming their humanity. It was not a question of coping but that of affirming their humanity. They mobilised religious and cultural resources from various sources and devised strategies for affirming their humanity. These resources and strategies are very important in individual identity and group formation. Some of the resources mobilised would be symbols held in common with other groups but they will be appropriated and claimed by the group. This is what Jean Comaroff (1985) called symbolic negotiation.

Symbolic negotiations are claims, by individuals and groups, over legitimate ownership and control of "symbolic discourse, practice, and forms of association that comprise a worldview" (Chidester, 1989: 21). Symbols are part of society's cultural landscape and no individual or group has exclusive ownership over them. Like culture, symbols are resources from which people draw in their processes of self-definition (Thornton, 1988). The reason for having claims and counter claims on symbols is due to "deep ambiguity and negotiability of symbols" (Beidelman, 1987:546). As Beidelman (1986:8) observed, "much of Kaguru social life is a constant negotiation between self-serving, protective ambiguity and co-operative or exploitative explication of social rights and obligations". The negotiability of symbols has to do with their ambivalence and the plurality of meanings that can be attached to them. The inherent ambiguity of symbols allows social groups to appropriate and interpret them in accordance with the

interests of that particular social group. It serves the cause of the group's self-definition.

Historian of religion David Chidester (1989:6) suggested that a worldview "is a multidimensional network of strategies for negotiating person and place in a world of discourse, practice, and association". "Person and place" refer to human identity and the place a human occupies in the constructed reality. The "world of discourse" is the broad interpretative framework within which reality is understood and experienced. It establishes, constitutes, and sustains the social world in which the individual participates. It includes socially established cognitive knowledge, roles, values, attitudes, emotions, motives, and decisions to engage in one line of action rather than the other (Wanamaker, 1999).

3. African Indigenous Churches in Scholarship

3.1. Mission History

Chidester (1996) has observed that missionaries were involved in the practice of comparative religion from the beginning. Africans were said not to have a religion based on the theory that they did not have an idea of a Supreme Being or God. The missionary Shaw, for example, said that the Xhosa had "no knowledge of God whether true or false" (Chidester, 1996:91). The earlier missionaries said that Africans had degenerated from a superior civilisation to an inferior one. The inferiority of African civilisation was reflected in their superstition

"including their belief in witchcraft, their practice of circumcision and their funerals". In fact "African superstition was the trace of a lost religion" (1996:91). The degeneration was so bad that Africans had reached the same level as animals. Thus, they were called beasts or brutes. The absence or lack of religion went along with the lack of "other defining human features, such as institution of marriage, system of law, or any formal political organisation" (1996:14).

The assertion that Africans lacked religion and they were at the same level with animals meant that they had no human rights.

As animals by comparison to Europeans, therefore, indigenous people who lacked a religion also lacked any recognizable human right or entitlement to the land in which they lived. ... Animals, therefore, had no human rights to life or land, neither did the indigenous people in the Americas, Australia, Africa, or the Pacific Islands, who were classified as beastly or brutal because they lacked religion. (Chidester, 1996:14)

Furthermore, lack of religion also meant lack of industry. Africans were said to be living a "life of laziness and indolence" (Villa-Vicencio, 1988:43). Missionaries saw their task as that of taming the African beast. One of the ways of doing that was to teach him or her (the African) the value and dignity of work. The Gospel was believed to be the most important "weapon" for taming the beast. James Stewart of the Lovedale mission pointed out that the "gospel was the basis of what he called Christian civilisation" (Villa-Vicencio, 1988:43). Work and commerce were part of that Christian civilisation. In fact, "[t]he

missionaries were fervently convinced that *the* most important gift they could impart was the gospel" (Villa-Vicencio, 1988:44). The earlier missionaries were on a civilising mission, and the gospel being the forerunner of the mission.

Missionaries thought that they were going to simply impose their faith and their culture on Africans. For "[t]heirs was also, however, a religion influenced with a sense of cultural superiority and arrogance" (Du Bruyn and Southey, 1995:28). They worked hard "to smash African religions, social and thereby, political systems in order to replace these with those imported from Europe" (Bredekamp and Ross, 1995:3). They found it very difficult to make a break-through, but eventually after conquest of African polities they were able to get a number of converts. Etherington (1997:97), referring to the effectiveness of missionary messages among the AmaZulu, pointed out the difficulties which all of them had. They were only able to get few converts and they also came in small numbers.

Neither the friendly blandishment of Colenso nor the hell-fire preaching of the Americans and Wesleyans nor the medieval communalism of the Hermannsburg Lutherans proved especially effective. In the first five decades of evangelization material factors were far more important than spiritual ones in drawing adherents. Converts, or *kholwa* as they were called in Zulu, came in dribs and drabs rather than waves. (Etherington, 1997:97)

Bredekamp and Ross further pointed out that for Christianity to survive and grow it had to be seen and experienced as an indigenous religion. As a result, "the history of Christianity in South Africa is a history of this process of naturalization" (Bredekamp and Ross, 1995:3). The process of naturalization was neither simple nor uncontested. There were exchanges between missionaries and their congregations, which resulted in Christianity being regarded as an indigenous religion. As a result, early in the twentieth century African Christians did not associate their faith with whites. Developments in the twentieth century saw Christianity becoming a firmly entrenched part of the cultural and religious landscape in South Africa.

Historian of Missions and World Christianity Lamin Sanneh observed that missionaries realised that the only way to make sense to Africans was for their message to be translated. Translation is not a simple process of replacing English with vernacular. The gospel message had to be translated into the vernacular idiom. Numerous complex discussions about what vernacular terms to use in describing God were held, and this suggests that there were competing forces and interests at work. Missionaries, according to Bredekamp and Ross (1995), had the upper-hand in most negotiations but could not simply impose their will because they could find themselves preaching to an empty church. As the process of negotiation and translation unfolded it was clear that there were different interests at play. In Sanneh's (1989:173) words,

We may observe in this connection that missionaries and Africans played complementary roles in the establishment of the religion. ... Indigenous aspirations were promoted by the vernacular prospects of scriptural translation while missionaries were committed to translation from motives of numerical success. ... Missionaries continued to be committed to the development of the vernacular as a foil to the establishment of the Christianity they knew and trusted. ... Africans acquired from vernacular resources a strengthened determination to reject foreign interpretations of the religion. It is the common nature of this tension that the concept of reciprocity tries to elucidate.

In Sanneh's work it is clear that Africans were not victims in the process of translation. They benefited immensely by translation, especially of the Bible into the vernacular. This is clearly evident in the development of the African indigenous churches and the different interpretations they have formulated. The process of translation proved to be vital to the conversion process. Furthermore, Sanneh suggests that due to the availability of scriptures in the vernacular, converts were able to come up with their own interpretations independent of Western models. In fact, "local converts appropriated the gospel without running it through Western filters first" (1995:177). The Bible was appropriated as a local symbol, which could be interpreted by indigenous people in ways they found appropriate.

3.2. African Indigenous Churches

The twentieth century saw a gradual development in the study of African indigenous churches from being called separatist churches driven by political motives, to sophisticated socio-historical and anthropological studies which understood them as African initiatives drawing upon Christian and African resources in their attempt to define what it means to be human. The earlier studies were dominated by authors who either were part of the missionary enterprise or who sympathised with its aims. Such studies tended to denigrate and discredit AICs. The historical development of the AICs in scholarship can be traced as follows: In the earliest studies they were seen as not only an ecclesiastical but also a political threat and as such they were called separatist. The next development was the recognition that the phenomenon was religious, but that it mixed Christian and African practices. The process of mixing was called syncretism. The third stage was the determination that the AICs were African movements. The last stage appeared in socio-historical and anthropological studies in which AICs are understood to be both African and Christian.

The first attempt at understanding the movement was a study by Allan Lea (1926). This study reflected the attitude of a generation of missionaries who were threatened by secession. In the earlier part of the twentieth century the AICs, especially the Ethiopian churches, were linked to the emerging sense of Black Nationalism. Theologian Bengt Sundkler explains this further by saying that the "Ethiopian

problem' was discussed with interest and almost with anxiety not only by missionaries, but also by politicians, scholars and others interested in the welfare of the country" (1961:13). These churches were then called the separatist churches. According to Chidester (1992:112), earlier independent churches "tended to retain the doctrines and practices of missions, while creating separate organisational structures". The white religious leadership became uncomfortable with an African initiative independent of white control, thus they sought to discredit and delegitimize it. Chidester (1997:323) argued that, "the very notion that African independent, African indigenous, or African initiated churches formed a unified category emerged out of the concerns of white church leaders that African initiatives represented a Christian heresy, a political threat, and, ... a foolish desire to get rid of the white man's control". Since these churches were out of the control of mission influence, they were called separatist churches. The term separatist was meant to say that these churches were not Christian. They did not fit into the definition of Christian generated by the white missionary establishment. In other words, indigenous churches were not recognised as authentically Christian, that is, they were a forgery.

African Indigenous Churches appear in earlier studies as the "other", which is assumed to be mysterious, and not authentically Christian. The charge that they are "separatist" or "syncretist" makes the point that these churches are not authentic, i.e., they are a forgery. Pauw

(1995:8) says that the missionaries referred to members of the AIC as "misled and sectarian people who jeopardise the work of God through syncreticism and neo-paganism". He further observed that there were even suggestions that AIC members were possessed by the demonic forces. These are some of the attempts by those who belonged to the mainline churches to create a distance between themselves and the AICs. The aim was to discredit and even disown the AIC of belonging to the Christian fellowship. Some Black Church leaders in the mainline Churches were threatened by these churches and even wanted their activities forbidden. In fact, "they felt outraged when their members were drawn towards the independent churches, particularly whenever they have been placed under discipline, and regarded this as a sheep-stealing" (Pauw, 1995:8). Missionaries projected an image of their "Mainline" Christianity as orthodoxy, the proper or normative Christianity. Theologians who studied these churches were motivated by the desire to prove that they are not truly Christian.

The study by L Mqotsi and N Mkele (1946) of "a separatist church", was the first social scientific study of the AICs. According to Vilakazi (1986: 3) the two men had no vested interests as they sought to understand the sociological process of separatism. He further says that they examined their subject without "allowing their own private religious convictions to intrude into the study and colour their account".

Theologian Bengt Sundkler in his 1948 book *Bantu Prophets*, which was heralded as a classic, developed the idea that AICs are syncretic. This was very important in the later development of studies of the AICs. Sundkler drew a distinction between two types of churches within the independent fold. Firstly, he identified the Ethiopian-type, which was regarded as a book (*incwadi*) religion. Its leadership was that of a chiefly nature. Secondly, he identified the Zionist-type, which was regarded as spirit (*umoya*) churches. The leadership structure is that of a prophetic nature. He further says the AICs bring non-Christian elements to the Christian faith. Another theologian, G.C. Oosthuizen gave his own definition of syncretism and how it manifests itself.

The mixture of the old and the new, by people who stand in the old and select from the new, leads to syncretism pure and simple. Syncretism is basic to all naturalistic religions and becomes a problem when a prophetic religion like Christianity which is "based on the assumption of God's initiative in the act of self-disclosure, and naturalistic-cosmic (or naturalistic-monistic) religions meet each other". ... In movements we have discussed, it was relatively easy to work out a *syncretistic third or post-christian religion* (a religion of neither Christian nor traditional), because of the leaders being influenced by Christianity but also steeped in traditional religion. Here the chiliastic-messianic elements becomes the major emphasis covered in magic nativism, and it comes with great vitality and expectation. (1968:91)

The term syncretism is derogatory, meaning an illegitimate mixing of Christian and African elements or the bringing of non-Christian

elements into the faith. The bringing of non-Christian elements leads to the perversion of the faith. "Syncretism" is not a neutral category; it is ideologically loaded. In Pato's words, "in so far as the AICs are understood as Christian churches, the idea that they are syncretistic is based on an ideological assumption that Christianity is a unified consistent phenomenon against which deviations may be checked and balanced" (1990:2).

For Oosthuizen and Sundkler syncretism is a way back to paganism. In fact, it is not progressive but regressive. The idea of progress is structured in a way that African practices are part of the old, which is supposed to be the past, which is supposed to be forgotten. Christianity, on the other hand, is the future revelation. When there is a mixture, it provides bridges to heathenism. Oosthuizen was adamant that the ethnocentricity of the AICs disqualified them from being Christian, because ethnic rituals and other practices have become central to these churches. He then suggested that "the only way to counteract syncretism here is to build a community of reborn in Christ, where man's works do not take precedence, but rather God's grace with which quality of life is lived of which the New Testament gives sufficient evidence" (1968:210). What comes out very clearly in Oosthuizen's work is that he thinks that there is one correct analysis of the Bible, and that interpretation is of the dominant church. As a theologian he clearly had a vested interest in denying

AICs a Christian identity. He uses theological standards and categories to evaluate and judge the AICs.

Chidester (1989) rejected the notion that AICs represented a mixture of the African and Western Christian worldviews, for it assumed that these were two bounded and static entities. His starting point is that worldviews are "open-ended processes of negotiation and renegotiation- changing, in flux, in transition- with no closed, permanent, substantial essences (ibid. 20). Hence, there is no "pure" Christianity or African tradition.

The third stage of development arrived when the AICs were recognised as authentically African. That type of identification was due to the fact that they drew heavily from traditional African practices and customs. This development was important because these churches were now recognised as a significant component of the African religious landscape.

Firstly, the initial phase in this development was the adaptation to urban living thesis. Anthropologists, Martin West (1975) and James Kiernan (1990b) pointed out that African Indigenous churches served to smooth the transition from the rural areas into the urban setting. Kiernan argued that,

The alternative causal nexus resides in the fact that we are dealing with the most industrialised and urbanised region in

Africa in which there is a very high turn over of migrant labour. Large numbers of people find themselves poor and estranged in unfamiliar surroundings, culturally and socially disoriented and without adequate social institutions to provide for their needs. The hypothesis is that religious institutions spring up to smooth the transition for them, an hypothesis which derives from the American Sociology of Religion. (1990b:6)

West went as far as to suggest that AICs replaced rural kinship networks and other traditional structures in an urban environment. They serve the same purpose in the urban areas as kinship networks in the rural areas did. In West's words,

The system of social organisation in the rural areas, based largely on co-operation between kith and kin, is no longer viable in Soweto, as kin are usually far apart, and administrative decrees determine where you shall live. What is required in order to adapt to this new and changing situation are new bases for social organisation, and should examine the churches in this light. ... We suggest that this blend of old and new in the churches is an important factor in attracting members into their congregations because it facilitates adaptations to the urban environment by providing an important link between it and the environment from which they came. (1975: 195-196)

The problem is that in the townships there are other churches that serve as the havens for people. For people who come from the rural areas of the Eastern Cape coming to Cape Town, they simply look for their home churches. If they were Methodists they will simply look for a Methodist church in their vicinity, where they would introduce

themselves and the church would welcome them. If someone were coming for a short period, he or she would ask *ukuzigcinisa*. *Ukuzigcinisa* means that the local church would know a visitor to the area so that if anything happens to them, their local church would be informed. It goes beyond mere introductions; it also involves spiritual guidance. Such a policy was put in place to make sure that even if people go to far places they would still adhere to the moral code taught by the local church.

Secondly, the black working-class thesis emerged as a critique of the adaptation to urban living thesis. Old Testament scholar and Black Theologian Itumeleng Mosala (1985:110) identified theoretical problems with most of the earlier studies as "reflecting ruling class interests and models of explanation". He proposed that cultural notions of "Africanness" mystified the social and historical analysis of AICs.

Studies in African Independent churches have missed the point mainly because they have tended to view these churches in terms of liberal anthropology, emphasising their "Africanness" in some static ahistorical form. A more helpful and liberating exercise would be to analyse these churches socio-historically, so that their social class character can be seen for what it is. When West, Sundkler and other liberal anthropologists raise the question of culture, they do so in relation to a mythical, monolithic, timeless African culture. The major theoretical weakness of this position is that it does not explain why, if "Africanness" is the key feature of these churches, it is not the case that all Africans are members of the African Independent

churches or even shares the faith of African Independent churches.

Mosala maintained that the AICs are black working-class churches, especially the Zionist churches. It is only a socio-historical analysis that would help to give a better understanding of these churches. As a result, the fact that they are working-class churches "can not be explained in terms of the fact that their members are African who still cling to some African traditions" but through a "thorough going social-cultural analysis of the prehistory of the black working class, and the rural areas" (1985:110-111). Furthermore, these churches are a socio-cultural protest using pre-colonial African resources. They reject definitions of Christianity based on Western capitalist models. Mosala asserts a different kind of African identity- a dynamic one, which is firmly entrenched in historical and the sociological developments.

Glenda Kruss was critical of the functionalist framework within which earlier scholars had operated. Their studies never provided any useful historical context, treating all Africans as a monolithic bloc with no differentiation. She further argued that even poverty was turned into a state of mind rather than an experienced reality. The tendency to reify culture is also pointed out from these studies. In her own words,

The assumption that the two opposing cultures, traditional African and Western Christian, exist as separate neatly defined entities which can be dipped into at random to select beliefs, values, and meaning to meet the present needs of Africans in a

new alien world. However, no culture is timeless and static.
(1986:27-28)

As Kruss observed, Africans in these studies are presented as "cultural beings, attempting to find values and meaning in a new Western cultural situation" (1986:28). Such a depiction when taken to its logical conclusion would say that Africans shift from one identity to the other. It does not credit African innovation and creativity in mobilizing resources from various sources for the process of identity formation.

Thirdly, developments in research on AICs found gaps in the earlier explanatory models, which led to the emergence of a positive-response-to-the-gospel thesis. Theologian C.M. Pauw (1995) suggested that AICs are a response by Africans to the Christian message. They represent a positive response that interprets the gospel in people's own terms. People have appropriated Christian symbols and creatively made something of their own. Africans used their creativity and innovation to make something that is truly their own. In fact,

AIC leaders have attempted, to make creative symbols of traditional and Christian beliefs, creatively formulating truly African Christianity which gives Africans an African identity: they represent radical indigenisation and Africanisation of Christianity. (Pauw, 1995:16)

Chidester takes the debate further by suggesting fresh ways of looking at these churches. His concern was that some academic studies had

tended to depart from social-scientific analysis to theologise about these churches. Such a tendency disadvantaged the AICs. Scholars with vested interests used the platform of the academic study of religion to exclude these churches from the Christian fold. He further suggested that

Academic analysis of the AICs can only proceed by departing from the theopolitical baseline of "Christian" or "Christianity", as a *genus* for classifying these movements. AICs are Christian by definition, but focus on the term "Christian", in the study of the AICs tended to encourage the substitution of theological evaluation for academic analysis. (1988:85)

The fourth stage in the development of the study of the AICs emerged in research that recognised them as both African and Christian. There has been a realisation that these churches are important African initiatives aimed at defining what it means to be human in a dehumanising environment. Furthermore, "African interpretations of Christian symbols are not simply transpositions into a different idiom; they are strategic appropriations of power" (Chidester, 1989:26). The first independent churches emerged in an era where Africans were increasingly being pushed off their land, as well as being sidelined within the churches. For example, Nehemiah Tile left the Methodist Church to found the Thembu National Church in 1884, as a result of political, cultural and ecclesiastical reasons. In fact, he "was dissatisfied with his long period of probation before being ordained, and he resented the fact that church funds were only allowed to be

handled by white ministers, but the main source of conflict seemed to have been Tile's increasing involvement in Thembu politics" (Chidester, 1992:114). In their quest to become human, Africans in their churches draw on both the African and Christian resources. Chidester (1997:11) has observed that these churches are not "simply a product of mixing and merging of African and Christian worldviews". The terms "mixing" and "merging" tend to downplay the creative process involved in the shaping of the worldviews of these churches. He suggests the use of the term "negotiation" to describe the process of worldview formation by the AICs. Negotiation presupposes intellectually engaging both the traditional religions and Christianity. Therefore, AICs are not a synthesis of traditional religions and Christianity but they are "engaged in detailed appropriations of religious resources that can be mobilized in working out the meaningful contours of the world" (1997:11). The mobilized resources are used in the process of individual and group formation. Based on such an understanding, one reaches the conclusion that these churches are both African and Christian.

4. Religious economy of Gugulethu

Sociologists Roger Finke and Rodney Stark (1992) described America as a free market religious environment. People have a choice as to which religious body to affiliate with. In such an environment "religious organisations must compete for members and the 'invisible hand' of the market place is as unforgiving of ineffective religious firms

as it is of the commercial counterparts" (1992:17). The survival of religious bodies is dependent upon the content of their theology, marketing strategies employed, methods of delivery and customer satisfaction. People make rational choices about where to align themselves, and that religious body has to help them make sense of the world around them. Religious economies "are devices that allow for the examination of the dynamic interplay of religious bodies as they seek to attract and hold on to a committed membership" (1992:6). It is noteworthy that no religion can ever dominate the religious economy even if it is state sponsored because of consumer preferences. Where the freedom of choice is suppressed, alternative religious bodies go underground and resurface once freedom is allowed. Each religious body has its trademark and ways of making customers happy and satisfied. It is the content of the theology of each group that helps to inculcate a sense of commitment to the body.

A religious body is a configuration of resources and strategies mobilised to create individual and group identities. Such resources are drawn from various sources and are presented in a coherent and meaningful way to those who choose to be members. The religious economy of Southern Africa has been greatly impacted upon by Christianity. Since its naturalization, Christianity has become an important resource from which various religious bodies draw. It will be clearly demonstrated how it has impacted on religious forms in Gugulethu and the surrounding informal settlements.

Gugulethu owes its existence to the Group Areas Act and segregation policies. These two required racially exclusive and segregated areas. Gugulethu (Our Pride) was proclaimed by the government in 1958 "to house Africans from racially mixed areas like Kensington, Simonstown and District Six, etc" (Ngcokoto, 1989:20). Makhosana (1988) reported that the removal of Africans into townships in the Cape Peninsula was part of the strategy to stem the influx of blacks. The planning of the township was such that buffers were created between Gugulethu and coloured residential areas in the same vicinity: to the west a railway line was built as a buffer with Heideveld and Manenberg, to the north the N2 highway acted as a buffer with Montana and Cloetesville. The aim was to ensure that there is no communication between Africans and Coloureds. Gugulethu has a history of deprivation and poverty due to neglect by government and lack of proper planning.

In Gugulethu, as was the case in Langa in 1963, as noted by Wilson and Mafeje (1963:91) "churches are the dominant type of association", in terms of the numbers of participants and the influence they have on the community. Church buildings are a regular sight in Gugulethu. On Sundays scores of people make their way to different churches, clad in different uniforms. On Thursdays women from different denominations are visible as they make their way to their respective places of worship. On Saturdays it becomes difficult to drive along the streets of Gugulethu due to traffic congestion caused by a number of funeral processions. Among the mourners are scores of people in their

church uniforms. This is an indicator that Christian religion is a very important part of the cultural and ideological landscape of Gugulethu. Ngcokoto (1989:60) observed that in Gugulethu Christianity had become part of the African tradition:

Most African youth start growing up in church. This is a hangover from customs brought by their parents from the rural areas. In Cape Town townships most present day youth are born of parents who either grew up in the homelands or resided in mixed areas from prior to the implementation of the Group Areas Act. In both these environments, the background of the missionaries and the church as an African tradition was strong.

In Gugulethu there is a predominance of Christianity in different forms, which is demonstrated by different denominations with different doctrines, policies, and visions. Following are some of the Christian denominations found in Gugulethu: Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Moravian, Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventist, Zionist Christian Church, St John's Apostolic Faith Mission, and a host of Indigenous churches. There is co-operation among denominations at a ministerial level, in the form of a minister's fraternity called IDAMASA. It is not clear whether that co-operation filters down to local congregations.

There are also adherents of African Traditional Religions (ATR) in Gugulethu. Since ATR is not institutionalised it is not easy to determine how many people adhere to it. What has been established is

that there is a widespread practice of different African practices. Mafeje (1975:172) alluded to this point when he observed that in Langa people from various Christian denominations shared beliefs in the ancestors and had held on to their *amasiko*. There are Christians, who are committed to their congregations and their vision, who are also equally committed to their *amasiko*. Isichei (1995) has observed that in the post-1994 South Africa there is a trend toward embracing traditional religions among African communities. People are coming out freely and honouring their traditional obligations. Seemingly, most people feel no contradiction between a belief in the Christian God and consulting the ancestors.

For this reason, diviners still practice in Langa: they are consulted most readily by migrants but townsmen also, including some middle-class families, apply to a diviner when misfortune follows misfortune, or an illness proves incurable. However, the townsmen, and more particularly the middle class, go to diviners secretly, it is felt by many to be "uncivilized" besides being contrary to the teaching of most churches. (Wilson and Mafeje, 1963:110)

African Indigenous Churches are generally looked down upon, an attitude that is not only confined to Gugulethu but is common throughout the country. Mafeje (1975) observed that in Langa they were referred to as *oozenzele* (self-made churches). Pauw (1995:9) outlined some of the reasons as follows:

On the one hand the mainline church members would tend to look down upon their Zionist counterparts because of a

generally lower standard of education, a less strict attitude towards various moral or other prescriptions and their supposedly nativistic tendencies. On the other hand situations arise such as in case of illness and misfortune where the prayers of the Zionist would appear to be more effective than those of the mainline churches. It is not uncommon for mainline church members to secretly participate in prayer sessions of AICs or to approach them for help in times of distress.

This description is consistent with the findings of Wilson and Mafeje (1963), and Mafeje (1975). There is a general consensus in scholarship on AICs that the bulk of their membership comes from the poor classes. These churches appear at the bottom of the social heap. The profile of membership is working class and their major problems are illnesses and unemployment. Their ministers have no formal theological education. Most of these churches have no proper places of worship. The house of the leader becomes the central focus of the church. If there is enough space in the yard a structure is erected and is used as the church. This structure serves other functions when not used for church business. Many St John's congregations in the Black townships are based at the leader's home. There is a sanctuary with an altar. The church has to be painted blue (sky) and white, the colours of the church. Mrs Melusi a leader, said that it is essential for the leader to have space in his or her yard and to build enough rooms to accommodate the sick who come there for healing and prayers. Wilson and Mafeje observed the class differences in denominational membership in Langa,

In town class differences between the membership of different denominations are more apparent. Educated middle-class people are most often members of the Anglican, Presbyterian, African Methodist Episcopal or Methodist Churches, whereas the Zionists are mostly uneducated people, often of pagan families. (Wilson and Mafeje, 1963:101)

The AICs are ridiculed because they have no history, no book, and no white man as founder. It was not only the white political establishment that ridiculed the AICs but some black ministers and ordinary members from the mainline churches who did not give them any respect. They were accused of ancestor worship. Paul Makhubu refuted those allegations as follows,

Although most of the AICs believe in the existence of ancestral spirits, they do not worship them. ... Many of the African Independent Churches honour and respect ancestors. This is something that is deeply rooted in African people. No matter how Westernized and educated some blacks maybe, the ancestors are remembered, even if not all the rites and customs are observed, performed or accorded to them. (1988:60)

5. Methodology

Fieldwork for this project was conducted between April 1997 and October 2000. It comprised in-depth interviews and participant observation. In total there were nineteen interviews, nine from each church and one with a traditional healer. Those interviewed were selected from different sectors within the two churches. The aim was to get a balance of views from the young and old, from the leaders, as

well as from ordinary members. The other component was participant observation in various activities. At St John's the following activities were attended: services (healing services during the week, and Sunday services), *Insebenzo* (healing activities on Wednesdays and Saturdays), *Amathwasa* (an all night vigil held at the first weekend of the month), baptism at the seaside, and *Umsebenzi wenkomo* (a ritual by one of the leaders). At RPCSA the following activities were observed: Sunday services, Easter and Good Friday celebrations, fund-raising functions, confirmation service, baptism communion, wedding, and a home opening ritual. Participant observation was very important because increasingly people open up and volunteer information about some aspects of their church without being asked. This is a very useful research method because as a researcher one observes how people behave, and this would in some ways help to fill the gaps in information given during interviews.

The present study employs a phenomenological method of analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with members of both entities on a wide range of issues pertaining to their own personal experiences of their particular church as well their perception of other entities. Participant observation was also done in that I joined the two groups in a variety of their activities.

In the process of data collection there are ethical questions which I was faced with as a researcher. Social scientific research is about

people's lives and it would be very important for me to make sure that they are protected. This makes it very important for their identities to be protected and therefore all people's names have been changed.

6. The profile of the two churches

6.1. St John's

The St John's church I worked with is now based in KTC. Mrs Melusi started the congregation in 1989 in Gugulethu. Because she did not have a place of her own she had to move the church to a site in KTC. The church membership is about forty-five; three quarters are women, the quarter are men, and the youth and children constitute a third of the general membership. Mrs Melusi pointed out that they get scores of non-members each week participating in their activities. These individuals come to these activities for various reasons. Some come for *inhlahlubo* (divining), prayers, and the majority come for *insebenzo* (healing activities). Healing is the major activity in the church.

The residence of the leader, which is part of the church complex, is called *itrone* (the throne). There are extra rooms to cater for those who are very ill and need constant prayers and attention from the prophet. The time spent at the throne varies according to the nature of the problem that an individual has. While at *itrone* they are expected to help with some chores in the church, e.g., cleaning, fetching wood, and generally helping during the days of *insebenzo*.

The church is affiliated to the national body, St John's Apostolic Faith Mission. Archbishop Christina Nku (fondly referred to as Mme Christina or Ma Nku) founded St John's in 1939.

Ma Nku, as she is popularly known, was born to farm labourers in the Viljoensdrift district, Helbron, and baptized in the NG Sendingkerk, troubled by ill-health and experienced visions. In her constant search for health she joined the Apostolic Faith Mission and was in contact with other Zionist leaders who had been part of the original Dowie- Le Roux congregation in the 1920s. (Kruss, 1985:165)

St John's had become a national church before the split in 1970, which left it divided into two factions, one led by Mrs Nku (Archbishop) in Evaton and the other led by Bishop Petros Masango in Germiston. The source of the conflict was a leadership dispute, which ended up in the Pretoria Supreme Court, which confirmed Bishop Masango as the leader of the church. The congregation in KTC is part of the Masango faction. Bishop Masango himself baptized Mrs Melusi, and he helped her to become a minister. Even though the Masango faction won the case in court, they still regard Ma Nku as their spiritual mother. Ma Nku features prominently in their prayers, sermons, and narrations of their history. She is also credited for healing and guiding Masango to become the leader that he was. In Ma Nku's words, "I have saved his life, ordained and anointed him, and made him what he is today directed by the Holy Spirit" (West, 1975:66).

6.2. Reformed Presbyterian Church

The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Gugulethu is at Section 1, next to Gugulethu Indoor Sports arena. The church is built on a huge plot of land. On the property there is a church building, the manse and a training centre. For a long time the church was a substation of Langa Tiyo Soga Reformed Presbyterian Church. The church building was dedicated on 27 November 1977, by Rev. J.Y Hliso, who was the moderator of Tiyo Soga Church, under whom Gugulethu was a substation. From 1977 to 1980 the church was plagued by a number of controversies and the Gugulethu branch broke away from Tiyo Soga. The minister responded by locking the church doors and not allowed people from Gugulethu to use the building. The branch responded by renting space from Fezeka Senior Secondary School for worship. Rev. Hliso took the matter of the Gugulethu branch to Supreme Court. In his submission to the court, Rev. Hliso alleged that 15 elders from Gugulethu branch had misappropriated funds. After examining the financial records, the bank book and bank statement, the judge ordered that Rev. Hliso should submit a fresh affidavit because the first one was riddled with untruths, within 21 days.

While the court case was going on the Business Committee of the church recommended that Rev. Hliso should resign as from 31 December 1980. He obliged and an interim moderator was appointed, Rev. Soga. The Gugulethu Branch was reinstated and all the elders who were expelled by Rev. Hliso. In 1988 the branch was given a

congregational status and they invited Rev. Xapile who was studying in Scotland at the time. Rev. Xapile could not take his appointment immediately, but he joined the church in 1989.

When Rev. Xapile first joined the church, it had a signed up membership of 400, within a matter of seven years the congregational membership had tripled to 1200. This phenomenal growth can be attributable to Rev. Xapile's charisma and bravery in being undeterred from doing anything regardless of the odds. He decided with the Kirk session to take the work of the church to where people were by creating strong Zones under the leadership of an elder. Elders in Zones created very strong teams to define what needed to be done and strategies to achieve their objectives. This delegation of responsibilities to the Zones helped to unlock people's talents, as well as to build leadership capacity in the church. In Rev. Xapile's words "I am happy that even if I am not here there are people who would give direction as to what has to be done". The strength of the Zones has been demonstrated during the annual church fundraising in February.

Between 1989 and 1995 the church was able to pay off the loan they took to buy the manse and then renovate it. It was through the efforts of men and women in the congregation that most of the projects were a success. Because of the public relations work by Rev. Xapile the church started attracting visitors and sponsors from Europe and the

United States. In 1996, after seeing a need in the community, a training centre was opened.

After being granted a congregational status the congregation decided to name itself JL Zwane Memorial Church. JL Zwane was a minister from Pietermaritzburg who was sent to Cape Town to deal with the crisis situation, which threatened to divide the church in 1952. It took him only one year to resolve the problem and create a situation of calm. After having dealt competently with this case he returned to Pietermaritzburg. It was for this reason that the Kirk session unanimously decided to honour Rev. Zwane.

The JL Zwane Church belongs to the Reformed Tradition, before the name changed to Reformed Presbyterian it was known as Bantu Presbyterian. The remnants of that era still remain among other people who say "*ndiya eBantu*" (I am going to Bantu Presbyterian). The church had connections with the Scottish Presbyterians which is the Free Church of Scotland.

The Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa was formed in 1923, and its first General assembly was held at Lovedale Missionary Institution under the moderatorship of Rev. William Stuart Burnshill... The Bantu Presbyterian Church has been fortunate in that it was closely related to the United Free Church of Scotland as its daughter. (Manual of Law, Practice and Procedure in BPCSA, 1958:v)

This church was not a secessionist church but developed from years of missionary work by the Free Church of Scotland. Elbourne and Ross (1997:67) stated that there was division among missionaries of the Free Church of Scotland about joining the New Multi-racial Church- PCSA. The minority wanted the union while the majority opted for an autonomous African Church. It was the policy of the Scottish missions to develop independent and self-governing African churches. This church was totally in the hands of the Africans. It was a culmination of a hundred years of mission work among AmaXhosa. The rationale was that Africans should develop an attraction to Christianity and the only way that would happen would be when they would understand it as their own (De Gruchy, 1979:15). The BPC continued to have a close relationship for a long time. Wilson and Mafeje (1963:93) also noted that the church in Langa received missionaries from Scotland.

7. Summary

As indicated above, this study understands conversion as a process of change management. In my research among the St John's Faith Mission and RPCSA communities in Gugulethu two models of conversion emerged, the crisis model at St John's, where individuals change their allegiance to groups because of a crisis in their lives, such as, illness or misfortune, and the growth model at the RPCSA, where individuals grow up being part of the group. Socialisation into

the group happens from a young age. The aim is to make him or her into a good Christian/Presbyterian.

Chapter 2 locates the present study within the broad literature on conversion. It also considers the African indigenous conceptions of the process. In dealing with how Africans perceived conversion, it became clear that there was an attempt on their side to interpret and understand Christianity in their own terms. Chapter 3 is about the crisis model as experienced at St John's. The different strategies for managing change are discussed. In Chapter 4 the growth model is discussed with some of the strategies used to manage change. In conclusion, Chapter 5 presents a comparative review of the two models, indicating points at which they meet. Both models are sets of strategies employed by Africans living in the same vicinity to make sense of the world around them. The ethnographic material clearly demonstrates that in both models there is a concerted effort to experience Christianity not as a foreign religion but as an indigenous reality.

CHAPTER 2

CONVERSION: A CONFUSED CATEGORY

1. Introduction

Conversion is a complex term with many uses. It is a category that has become a common currency in all studies of the work of Christian missionaries. There is a general consensus among scholars of conversion that the term refers to change, but that is where the consensus ends. This chapter explores various approaches grouped into two broad categories of social-psychological, and social-historical. Within the ambit of the social psychological approach, conversion is studied as self-transformation. The importance of the agency of the individual in this process is clearly evident. The individual plays a pivotal role in his or her conversion. By contrast, social-historical explanations tend to look at conversion within a broad social, economic, political and historical context. Social structures play a crucial role in the study of conversion for these scholars. But, as Robert W. Hefner (1993) has suggested, these two approaches would be strengthened by being brought together. He was restating a point made earlier by Emefie Ikenga-Metuh (1987:23) that "conversion in Africa is a multi-causal phenomenon", therefore; a multi-causal explanation is necessary. In developing a working model to understand conversion it is important to look at how Africans conceptualised and understood that process. That is, what did it

mean to them? Then a better understanding of the process can be established. It is, therefore, important for us to say what we mean by conversion. Conversion is an ongoing process of change that is managed-through symbols, narrative, ritual, and other religious strategies-either in terms of a crisis model or a growth model. In the coming chapters the two models will be dealt with in more detail.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social-Psychological explanations

David Snow and Richard Machalek (1983, 1984) used a socio-rhetorical method to theorise about conversion. They argued that a convert is a social type, i.e., he or she is a product of a social context or social reality. Converts can be identified through their talk and reasoning, in other words, through their discourse. According to Ricoeur (1995:46) "faith never appears as an immediate experience but always as mediated by certain language that articulates it". In other words, faith is couched and cloaked in the language of the faith community in order for it to have any meaning. Thus, for Snow and Machalek, conversion is change in the universe of discourse. These are "socially constructed frameworks of meaning imbedded in language and other symbols that provide a system or 'sacred canopy' (Berger, 1967) for making sense of the world" (Staples and Mauss, 1987: 135). In other words, they are the property of social groups. The universe of discourse "establishes, constitutes, and sustains the social

world in which the individual participates" (Wanamaker, 1999:20). For Snow and Machalek

conversion concerns not only a change in values, beliefs, and identities, but more fundamentally and significantly, it entails the displacement of one universe of discourse by another or the ascendance of a formerly peripheral universe of discourse to the status of a primary authority. (1984:170)

In developing their theory of conversion, Snow and Machalek identified four rhetorical indicators to measure the extent of one's conversion. The indicators encompass the talk, reasoning and actions of converts. These four properties distinguish converts from non-converts. Firstly, the adoption of a master attribution scheme, which is a pervasive scheme through which everything is explained. For a convert, this scheme makes all matters clear. This scheme informs all causal inferences (Snow and Machalek, 1983:270). It is possible that prior to conversion converts used different interpretative schemes to explain what was happening to them and around them. Once converted, only one interpretative scheme is used. Secondly, biographical reconstruction, a process through which the convert reconstructs his or her biography in terms of the new scheme. All previous acts and events are explained in terms of this all pervasive scheme. This does not imply a complete fabrication or destruction of the past, but rather a revisiting or re-interpretation of the past. The new scheme illuminates the past by casting everything in a new light. Thirdly, the suspension of analogical reasoning allows converts to

avoid comparing their new reality to anything else, assuming there is nothing like it. The act of comparison would diminish the power, importance and uniqueness of their experience. Finally, the convert embraces a master role. Here the new identity permeates all the roles of an individual. In fact, "it influences the convert's orientation in all interactive situations" (1984:174). The other roles that a convert has are important, but "their importance derives not from their intrinsic qualities, but from their relations to the master identity (Staples and Mauss, 1987: 137). For example, a pianist becomes a Christian pianist; he or she is influenced by a particular Christian orientation in her work. She uses her work to promote Christian ideals. In other words, the convert engages the world with a mission to further the vision of a master role. Some converts claim that their new faith is not just a religion but a total way of life, a way of organising and living one's life faithfully. For Snow and Machalek, the four rhetorical indicators are observable variables for identifying and analysing conversion objectively.

Staples and Mauss (1987) have criticised the Snow and Machalek model for neglecting the active role played by the convert in the process of his or her identity transformation. They insist that a convert is an active participant in this process. The assumption that converts are passive is demonstrated by the use of language in the Snow and Machalek model. According to Staples and Mauss, the central question is: "how do subjects use language and rhetoric to

achieve self-transformation" (1987:138). Language is seen as a crucial way through which individuals transform themselves.

Snow and Machalek view conversion in a way that focuses more on *what happens* to a person, while we view conversion as a process of *self-transformation*. ...For, Snow and Machalek, the subject's *self-conception* as a convert or a non-convert is largely irrelevant to determining whether or not the subject is a convert. Instead, they propose that the only basis necessary for the identification of the convert is the presence or absence of their four proposed rhetorical indicators of conversion. (1987:138)

On the subject of rhetorical indicators, Staples and Mauss argued that Snow and Machalek failed to distinguish between conversion and commitment. In their research, they discovered the prevalence of three of the four indicators among committed Christians. Only the rhetorical indicator of *biographical reconstruction* was a distinguishing feature for converts. The other three indicators "are probably indicators of religious commitment more generally, rather than conversion *per se*" (1987:133). Another problem with the Snow and Machalek model is that "it does not seem to recognise sufficiently the essentially subjective nature of conversion" (1987:145). Since conversion is such a subjective phenomenon the convert's own interpretation of the process must feature prominently in any analysis.

For Staples and Mauss, "conversion can be viewed as a *process*; that this process is fundamentally one of *self-transformation*; that self-

transformation is achieved primarily through *language* (Mead, 1934; Schwalbe, 1983); and that the convert plays an *active* role in his or her own transformation (1987:146). Self-transformation is said to be a change in the "real-self". The real-self being "who we really believe we are when all our social roles and self-presentations are stripped away" (1987:137).

Clearly, language plays a crucial role in conversion. It is through language that an individual achieves self-transformation. In fact, "ideological language functions as a resource, which in enabling believers to come to terms with ending problems of meaning in their lives, brings about a sense of being transformed" (Stromberg, 1990:43). Inevitably, individuals use discourse to transform themselves.

Theories of conversion have tended to focus on dramatic changes rather than small adjustments. Travisano drew a distinction between conversion and alternation. Conversion is a "radical reorganization of identity, meaning, and life" (1970:600). Such change requires that an individual's "informing aspect" be altered. Change in the informing aspect means that an individual changes allegiance from one source of authority to another. A clear shift of focus is evident; an individual sees life in a completely different light. There is a definite break with the former identity, which means discontinuity with the past. In fact, "we may say that conversion involves the adoption of a pervasive

identity which rests on a change (at least in emphasis) from one universe of discourse to another. Such universes of discourse are, of course, properties of social groups or authorities" (1970:600).

On the other hand, alternations are relatively easily accomplished changes of life which do not involve radical change in the universe of discourse and informing aspect, but which are part of or grow out of existing programs of behaviour" (1970:601). Such changes are provided for or permitted in the universe of discourse. Alternations develop naturally out of old identities. They are minor changes. Travisano used a number of examples to demonstrate this point. For example, it is expected that a high school boy could become a university student. Although the transition from school to university might be a bit difficult, it is understood by the society that owns the universe of discourse to be part of a growing up and learning process. The explanatory and reference framework of the boy does not change but it is further developed and expanded. There is no departure from the prescribed norms and values. It is taken for granted that people would experiment with a lot things in their lifetime, but eventually they come back to their senses later in life to adhere to what society expects of them. Society understands this stage to be the rebellious stage that passes as the individual learns more about life. Such an act is a challenge to societal values and morality but not their rejection. Lincoln (1987:136) has drawn the contrast between rebellion and revolution, the former being a challenge to an authority figure and the

latter a challenge to the source of that authority seeking to replace it with another source. If a Christian converts to Buddhism his or her world of discourse would be altered. His or her points of reference would be different. Conversion to Buddhism is likely to create a problem between the convert and his or her family and friends. Society finds it very difficult to deal with radical changes and they are considered to be betrayals or serious violations. In many instances they lead to individuals being cut off from their original group or being shunned by their families.

2.2. Social-Historical Explanations

2.2.1. An Intellectualist Approach

Robin Horton (1971, 1975a, 1975b) proposed an intellectualist approach to the study of African conversion. Earlier theories were premised on the idea that Africans were passive recipients of either Islam or Christianity. Horton begins his analysis by acknowledging the vibrance and dynamism of African cosmology. Inherent in African cosmological thought was the ability to change, develop, move forward and adapt to changing socio-structural factors. Horton proposed that "no human group is a *tabula rasa* which automatically registers the imprint of external cultural influences" (1975a:221). Each human group has its set of ideas and methods of knowledge generation. In support of Horton's position, Richard Gray observed,

Just as African Christian leaders are being challenged to react to the plight of the underprivileged majority, so are the scholars

summoned to reassess the concerns and cosmologies of the masses. The greatest single step in this reassessment has been the realization that African religions are not closed, static systems, impervious to change. With their eclectic insistence on practical results, African religions have been flexible, open to innovation and thoroughly capable of assimilating new concepts. (1978:95)

In other words, African cosmology adapted to changing socio-economic and political situations. Changes at the socio-structural level had a bearing on intellectual development.

Cosmology comprises "ideas about unobservable personal beings whose activities underpin the events of everyday world" (Horton, 1971:101). It is used as an instrument of explanation, prediction and control. According to Horton (1971) African cosmology has two tiers. The first tier is the microcosm, where lesser spirits operate, which is at a local level. The lesser spirits are in touch with people on a daily basis. They are the guardians of moral and social order. People have a well-developed and sophisticated system of relating to the lesser spirits. The second tier is the macrocosm, which is much broader. It is the realm of the Supreme Being. Africans had a poorly developed idea of the Supreme Being, except that He is the creator and controller of all things and that the lesser spirits derive their authority from him. There was no proper system of worship or approach to the Supreme Being. In other words, even though Africans might have had an idea of the Supreme Being, He still remained very distant. By contrast, Islam and Christianity had well-developed systems of beliefs and practices

in relation to a Supreme Being. In the light of these assumptions, Horton asked: How did Africans convert to world religions? What were the central factors responsible for the change?

During the pre-Islamic, pre-Christian period, Horton contended, there was a vigorous development of ideas about lesser spirits and how they operated. All events were explained in terms of their action or non-action. The microcosm is limited in that the rules of engagement and morality only apply within the local community. Such ideas have no relevance or application to a wider world. They are only appreciated and valued within the confines of the microcosm.

Horton's famous "thought-experiment" in which he speculated about how African cosmology would have responded to a changing socio-structural situation without either Islam or Christianity, was based on the hypothesis that the "nature of traditional cosmology gives one means of predicting how traditional religious ideas will respond to certain changes in this environment" (1971:102). Environmental changes would involve the development of commerce and nation-states. The consequences of these developments would be the improvement of communication and expansion of economic and political relations that would undermine boundaries among various microcosms. Such changes are enough to bring about changes in people's thought-processes, because they would be exposed to a wider world. Exposure to a wider world would lead to the weakening of the

microcosmic boundaries, which were important for people's self-definition. As the microcosmic boundaries are weakened there is a strong gravitation towards the development of a Supreme Being cult.

Massive socio-structural change would induce three results. First, the indigenous explanatory system would have to change. Traditional religious thought would be adjusted and adapted to meet the demands of the new situation. The concept of the Supreme Being would be developed to reach the necessary scope of explanatory coverage to account for the wider world. There would be a switch from a microcosmic to a macrocosmic explanatory system. The macrocosm would assume the same kind of responsibility that the microcosm had in the pre-change cosmology, that is, as an instrument of explanation, prediction and control. Second, lesser spirits would move away from the centre of the explanatory system and give way to the Supreme Being. In some instances lesser spirits would be regarded as irrelevant or even evil. A sophisticated cult of the Supreme Being would be developed, including standards for how He should be approached. Finally, more people would find themselves operating beyond the boundaries of their microcosm. Such a move would necessitate a development of a moral code that would regulate the wider world. The Supreme Being would underpin that universalist moral code. In other words, a universalist code would need the Supreme Being in order for it to be respected.

Based on these speculations, Horton concluded "the obvious inference is that the acceptance of Islam and Christianity is due as much to development of traditional cosmology in response to other features of the modern situation as it is to the activities of the missionaries" (1971:103). Even without the intervention of Islam and Christianity, Africans would have developed an idea of the Supreme Being. Both Islam and Christianity benefited from changes that were already in process. (Conversions to Islam and Christianity, therefore, resulted not from the appeal of their theologies but from massive socio-historical change.) ✕

African responses to the world religions are responses that were "in the air" any way. In other words, they are responses which, given the appropriate economic and social background conditions, would most likely have occurred in some recognizable form even in the absence of the world religions. ... given a marked weakening of microcosmic boundaries, some of the principal developments associated with "conversion" commonly did take place even in the absence of significant influence from either Islam or Christianity. (Horton 1975a:234)

The idea of a microcosm and a macrocosm in Horton's thought sounds like two rival spheres. It presupposes that once people have exposure to the macrocosm, the microcosm crumbles and people become vulnerable. There is an assumption that it is part of a natural progression that people embrace the macrocosm and the cult of the Supreme Being. Horton draws a distinction between macrocosm and microcosm that is too stark. But he does suggest the capacity of

people to change by adapting indigenous resources and he locates personal change in historical change.

In his study of labour migration among the Gcaleka people of Willowvale in the Eastern Cape, McAllister (1980) established that the conservatives (red people) were able to keep their explanatory system intact while they incorporated elements brought about by a changed socio-economic and political environment. The migrants took along homestead ancestors who protected people within the confines of their microcosm to the metropolitan centres of South Africa (see also West, 1975). The ancestors were supposed to accompany the migrants to an unknown territory and give protection from the dangers of mine work, as well as from other unknown forces; then they were to bring him back home safely. The migrant was supposed to come back to the village and build his homestead. Since the village is where he belongs, its microcosmic ethos remains intact even though he might be far from the village.

The emphasis on the return as a moral good in itself, for example, serves to highlight not only the danger of absconding but also the fact that the rural home is primary, to be served by means of occasional forays into the mining industrial world. Going out to work for the homestead is morally good and right; not to return to the rural structure and to accept its authority is morally wrong. (McAllister, 1980:232)

In fact, "migrant labour is rationalized and made meaningful in terms of the need to 'build the homestead' (*ukwakha umzi*) (1980:208).

Building a homestead means that the migrant is establishing himself firmly as part of the village. The hard work that he does is for the sole purpose of building his homestead and achieving the respectability that goes with it. The migrants move between the two tiers and even embrace elements from both at the same time.

An elaborate ritual system was developed to meet the changing socio-economic conditions. Reinterpretation of idioms, events and sayings happened in order keep the explanatory system intact while at the same time engaging with the socio-structural changes. The money economy was systematically integrated into the traditional system. The young migrant, on his return, pays homage to the village elders and the homestead elders. On his return he brings gifts and bottled liquor for close family and relatives. In McAllister's words "the authority of the elders of the community in general is aimed at ensuring that labour migration does not threaten or disrupt the accepted lifestyle" (1980:232).

McAllister's study exposes a contradiction in Horton's thesis. (Microcosmic ideas are supposed to be abandoned once people have been exposed to the macrocosm, because such ideas do not have appeal to a much wider world. Christianity developed a strong sense of the Supreme Being and monotheism while operating within a microcosm (see Kee, 1993). Traditional religions are confined to the village, which suggests ethnic particularism without universal appeal.) H

What is apparent in the Gcaleka case study, however, is that local ideas have demonstrated adaptability to changing socio-economic and political conditions. Horton's thesis should accommodate such a development because it acknowledges African thought as having inherent within it the potential to develop.

Horton seemed to think that the development of monotheism in Africa was a logical step. It was going to happen even without the intervention of either Islam or Christianity. This idea is not entirely convincing. What is it in African thought that suggests the inevitability of such a development? There is no historical or cultural evidence provided to support this claim. He imposed a Western notion of natural progression on African thought. As Ikenga-Metuh argued "it is fallacious to argue from the prediction of how traditional world-views would react to modernization in the event of an encounter (hypothetically framed) and then conclude that it did in fact react that way in all historical encounters" (1987:15). Hefner (1993:22) asserted that Horton neglected the influences of political and structural factors on conversion. There is no way that a discussion of conversion in Africa can be conducted without Christianity and Islam being seen as contributors.

Simensen's (1986) case study of conversion among AmaZulu (1850-1906) provides evidence contrary to the view that Christianity and Islam played a minimal role in the conversion process. Missionaries

worked very hard to package Christianity in such a way that it was attractive to indigenous people. Christianity also demonstrated flexibility, in that it could be packaged in different ways. However, it should be noted that the process of packaging happened in the midst of socio-economic and political processes. The Horton model isolates Christianity and Islam from these processes. The form of Islam or Christianity that developed in an area was as a result of a process of negotiation, and negotiation took different directions depending upon specific historical processes.

2.2.2. A Multi-causal approach

Ikenga-Metuh (1987) has classified approaches to the study of conversion in Africa into four categories, namely, (a) shattered microcosm, (b) intellectualist theory, (c) historical explanation, and (d) socio-structural approach. Each of the four approaches gives some insight into the study but each on its own is unable to deal with the complexity of conversion.

Ikenga-Metuh (1987) understands conversion as a socio-religious phenomenon. It has social as well as religious causes. He further pointed out that the period of massive conversion to Islam and Christianity corresponded with a period of rapid socio-cultural change, i.e., colonialism, industrialisation, and modernisation. All these factors contributed to conversion in Africa. In fact, "African conversion is both a process of adaptation of elements of traditional

beliefs and adoption of new beliefs" (1987:25). Thus he calls for a multi-causal approach because each of the approaches proposed emphasised one or the other cause.

Ikenga-Metuh does not share Horton's view that Christianity and Islam only benefited from changes that were in the air, in that, "exposure to the Christian faith and Islam and their missionary preaching and welfare programmes, are factors which are often underplayed in favour of supposedly underlying factors" (1987:23). He is of the view that no fair assessment of the conversion phenomenon in Africa can be undertaken without any reference to Christianity and Islam as major contributors.

In trying to find reasons for the proliferation of Independent churches, Ikenga-Metuh concluded that it is not easy to single-out one because they are many. The intolerance of missionaries towards African beliefs and customs was one of the major reasons for their emergence. For example, "missionaries in general expected Christians to be monogamous while aware of the cruelty and injustice involved in disrupting polygamous unions" (Isichei, 1995:96). Another contributory factor is the translation of the Bible into indigenous languages. Translation gave locals access to the Biblical messages, which led to the appropriation and adoption of the Bible as their *own* symbol, thus having a legitimate right to interpret it the way they think is appropriate.

A multi-causal approach requires more than theological speculation or anthropological “thought experiments”, but detailed historical, sociological, and ethnographic investigations.

2.2.3. An historical approach

Ranger's (1993) starting point in taking this approach is that pre-colonial African religion was not localised but was very fluid. The idea of a shattered microcosm is made redundant because African religion had both microcosmic and macrocosmic orientations. In African societies identity was not conceived in terms ethnicity but it was constructed politically. Ethnic boundaries were a late colonial invention. People identified themselves more as members of polities that had fluid boundaries. There was movement and interaction among people from different areas, which resulted in the exchange of ideas. In fact, “men interacted with others as traders, as hunters, as pilgrims. ...People constantly moved out of their microcosmic homesteads and villages, and other people as constantly passed into and through them (Ranger, 1993:73).

The movement, interaction, and exchange of ideas by people from various areas and polities had an impact on religious forms of belief, practice and identity.

African religions were symbolic of relationships, and cults were often a means of articulating such relationships, the complex patterns of society and economics matched by equally complex

religious pattern. ...one can see that African religions were multilayered and dynamic, with a history of contradiction, contestation, and innovation. From this perspective one might replace the model of total organic collectivity with something else –a model of creative and resilient pluralism. Such a model helps to explain the remarkable adaptability of African societies and individuals during the changes of colonial capitalism. (Ranger, 1993:73)

Ranger dispelled the myth of an organic, localised African society that was centrally controlled and waiting for something to happen. The microcosm was said to be safe and characterized by its shielding of members from the effects of the macrocosm. He argued that prior to colonialism, Africans operated at a microcosmic as well as the macrocosmic level; they had exposure to a wider world and alternative ideas. Religious development was, to a large extent, influenced by the fluidity of movement by people from different polities. Polities did not have rigid boundaries, they could expand or decrease due to war and other natural phenomena. Furthermore, “the locus of symbolic innovation and mythic creation was the macrocosmic region rather than the microcosmic village or chiefdom (1993:75).

As for Christianity, Ranger argued that it “was much less macrocosmic than the conventional model supposes. The problem is that the best known missionaries and missions are the ones that were the most committed to the transformation of small-scale Africa”. However, “most of the twentieth century missionaries were anticapitalist, hostile to urban life, anxious to rebuild rural societies.

...A majority of missionaries were concerned mainly with building local communities" (1993:89). The works of John L. and Jean Comaroff (1987, 1991, 1992) demonstrate how missionaries among the Tswana got involved in local struggles and contests over symbols and meaning. Missionaries were involved in contests over rainmaking, gender roles, agriculture, and how society had to be ordered. They appropriated local symbols in order for their message to have more appeal to the local. Eventually, such appropriations were important in making Christianity an indigenous religion.

2.2.4. A sociological approach

Robert Hefner (1993:25) suggested that conversion is a process of identity transformation and he relates it to the process of identity development called reference-group formation. The reference group offers individuals a basis for self-definition and self-identification, a way of affirming their humanity. It gives individuals a sense of who they are in relation to other people. Once a person's identity has been established he or she is able to negotiate space, obligations, and entitlements. In Hefner's words,

reference group theory emphasizes that self-identification is implicated in all choice, in all matters of self-interest, and in the myriad conflicts and solidarities of human life. More specifically, reference group theory stresses that in the course of their lives individuals develop a real or imagined reference group- an anchor for their sense of self and other and for the entitlements and obligations thought to characterize

relationships- and refer to that reference group when evaluating people, situations, and life projects. (1993:25)

Hefner further argued that the central part of personal identity is connection to others and the capacity to be responsive. Individuals derive their self-worth, self-identification and self-definition in relationship with others. Their individuality is recognised and affirmed. They are thus accorded status and allocated space within the context of a group.

Reference group orientation is a dynamic process of affirming human value, it does not start and end with one becoming a member of a reference group. It, however, "involves 'reflexive monitoring' ... of one's self image and goals in social action" (Hefner, 1993:26). This is an ongoing process of revisiting belief and values held in the light of social and political dynamics. Group membership does not necessarily mean that people share the group's outlook on reality in its entirety. There is a strong element of human agency involved here; individuals have the ability and capacity to make conscious decisions and choices about the course their lives should take. Some people "look elsewhere than their community of origin for alternative notions of self and self-worth" (1993:26). Therefore, "conversion implies the acceptance of a new locus of self-definition, a new, though not necessarily exclusive, reference point for one's identity" (1993:17).

Conversion does not take place in a vacuum; "it is influenced by a larger interplay of identity, politics, and morality" (1993:4). Hefner is of the view that for a much fuller understanding of conversion there is a need for an exploration of the interpenetration between the psychological and sociopolitical models.

Accounts of conversion that emphasize its putative psychological reality—such as the classic essays by Nock (1933) and James (1982) or a surprising number of studies in contemporary American sociology (Snow and Machalek 1984) – remain incomplete if they neglect the broader context that informs the self- and situational-evaluation of the converted. Politics and social ethics are *intrinsic* to the psychocultural reality of conversion, informing an agent's commitment to an identity and the moral authority that commitment implies (Hefner, 1993:28)

While underscoring the point made by Ikenga-Metuh about the multi-causality of conversion, Hefner located conversion in the identity politics of the reference group. It is more than the psychology of conversion, but also more than language, rhetoric, or discourse.

2.2.5. Conversion as a transaction 가반한 자 문 있어!

Developing a multi-causal analysis, Simensen has argued that conversion should be analysed as a transaction. Among AmaZulu between 1850 and 1906, conversion resembled a transactive exchange. Each group made concessions to the other. A social anthropological transaction theory is used to highlight the thesis. "Transaction theory applies the concept of the market to the whole

area of social change, focussing on the exchange values- material and non-material- in personal relations of reciprocity" (1986:83). The terms of the transaction kept on changing with socio-economic and political situation.

Out of the transaction missionaries wanted religious adherents who would help the gospel message take root among the AmaZulu. They had material means as bargaining tools, i.e., they possessed things and skills, e.g., medicine. These material goods were projected as fruits of Christianity. They were part of a specialised package that one gets as a Christian convert. By implication one had to be Christian in order to have access to these goods. At the same time, missionaries threatened people with disaster if they refused to convert. Simensen quotes H.P.S. Schreuder, a Norwegian missionary, making this point strongly:

Any people who time after time turned away from the gospel would certainly not remain long in the country- no! they would be torn away from their country like a useless thing and their country would be given to another people. (1986:84)

Missionaries could also provide an important link between the Zulu elite and the Natal government on whose goodwill they depended for protection against the Boers. For services rendered, material goods given, and strategic communication established, missionaries expected the Zulu elite to create conditions conducive for them to carry out their mission work and evangelism. This included being

given sites for mission stations within the Kingdom, and being given access to people who might be potential converts.

The AmaZulu were an independent polity and a people with “national pride” which was to prove a major hindrance to Christian growth. The King’s policy on conversion was that it was irreconcilable with Zulu citizenship and converts stood to lose their rights to land and family, as well as their political privileges. The policy made it extremely difficult for missionaries to get converts of good standing in the community.

Norwegian missionaries had two evangelising policies, one for the elite and the other for the commoners. When it came to the elite they were allowed to lure them with material means in order to secure their co-operation, and when it came to the commoners their strategy was supposed to be “based primarily on itinerant preaching: the word alone, when properly preached would suffice to promote the cause. Practical work should be kept at a minimum” (Simensen, 1987:87). The policy toward the commoners did not bear much fruit because it meant that commoners had to be taught the basic tenets of the faith, especially concepts of sin and salvation, without seeing any practical benefit. Missionaries had to inculcate a feeling of sin among the people, thus creating a need for conversion. People had to be convinced that they needed to convert.

Assessing the history of these transactions, Simensen found that the only effective strategy was using material means to attract people. The crises of the 1880s and 1890s provided missionaries with opportunities to talk to people because people voluntarily came to them for help. However, this was not a guarantee that people were committing to the new faith. Attendance at church services was meant to push the missionaries to buy their agricultural products or offer them some material assistance. For example,

Larsen at Umpumulo gave as his opinion at the same time that *nobody* came to service just to listen to God's Word. In the autumn attendance increased, because the people wrongly believed the missionaries would not buy their maize if they did not turn up on Sundays (Simensen, 1987:88).

The resistance of the AmaZulu and King Mpande's obstructionist policy on conversion convinced Norwegian missionaries that the only way to have a successful missionary enterprise was for Zulu independence to be undermined. Political independence provided people with a framework within which all existential questions were satisfied. People did not have a *need* for missionary ideas. Previous attempts to inculcate such a *need* did not bear much fruit. As a result, missionaries believed that the AmaZulu had to be humiliated in order to realise the value of Christianity and modernity. Some missionaries greeted the destruction of the Zulu polity with the economic distress and social chaos that followed, with satisfaction. Some even welcomed this destruction so that "it might again be

proven that when a people has been thoroughly humiliated and their national pride broken down, then in all abjection and submission they may be willing to listen to Him who invites all who are burdened to come to him and seek rest for their souls" (Simensen, 1987:94). Missionaries sanctioned the use of force and the subjugation of the AmaZulu in order to further the aims of the missionary enterprise. According to Simensen, this effort in humiliation still failed to secure royal converts. There were no significant numbers of Zulu royals who converted up to 1906.

The conquest of AmaZulu by the British in 1879 gave missionaries more bargaining power. They were allocated more land around the mission stations, which meant that their area of influence and control increased. The authority of the Zulu elite did not apply to the mission stations. Numerous people sought refuge in mission stations in the wake of civil wars and other crises. There was a perception among the elite that mission stations were only havens for social misfits and criminals.

Focussing on transaction, Simensen analysed missionaries as religious traders with the gospel as their primary product, they appealed to the immediate needs and wants of the people. Christianity was represented as the source of Western material objects and technology. As part of the transaction, AmaZulu could not take the material goods without receiving Christianity as well. It was hard to

sell Christianity by itself because it had no direct bearing or benefit to people's lives. Therefore, the material means were presented as the fruits of the Gospel. In order for AmaZulu to enjoy the benefits of Western technology, they had to start by accepting Christianity and give missionaries what they wanted, new converts, which represented human capital. Simensen presented evidence to the effect that those who converted did so in order to access material benefits, and more so after the destruction of Zulu independence and numerous crises that ensued. The transaction was largely determined by socio-political and economic changes. Conquest of the AmaZulu gave missionaries more control over the lives of Africans. For any African who wanted to survive within the system, missionaries held the keys of survival in this life in not in the next.

The transaction approach is useful in that it takes material circumstances into consideration. It does not treat conversion in isolation from social-historical factors. The transaction model does not only consider spiritual, intellectual or cosmological interests, but also material interests at stake. It advocates a detailed analysis of specific social-historical factors and forces. It is interests-based rather than needs-based. Focusing on the inherent analytical problems for historical analysis in the use of the term "needs", Chidester (1989: 24) proposed that "[r]ather than reducing human behavior to 'needs' by making claims about their satisfaction, frustration, or substitute gratification, historical (and especially religiohistorical) analysis opens

up human behavior to an exploration of specific religious, political and other social *interests* at stake in a particular process of social and historical formation". Such an all-encompassing approach leads to the analysis of negotiation.

3. Indigenous conceptions

3.1. African terms

Conversion is a complex subject which different faith communities interpret differently. There is also a possibility that individuals within a faith community will have different ideas about the meaning and substance of conversion. The term to convert in IsiXhosa is *ukuguquka* (*inguquko* is conversion), literally meaning to turn around or to make a turn or to change direction. During times of tribulation, people say *abaphansi basifulathele*, literally meaning that the ancestors have given their backs to us, that is, our ancestors have turned away from us. From the perspective of the traditionalists this act of turning leaves tradition behind, which is an act of betrayal.

However, *ukuguquka* has to be located within a socio-historical context in order to be helpful in our analysis. *Ukuguquka* is a multi-faceted term, it means turning away and towards, re-turning and returning. Firstly, *turning away and turning towards* is a simultaneous process, e.g., when an individual converted to Christianity he or she turned away from African religion. During early encounters with the missionaries in the nineteenth century, when

African polities were still independent, *ukuguquka* meant turning away from tradition towards Christianity. Traditionalists understood such an act as betrayal because it meant the rejection of traditional customs and practices. Among AmaZulu converts were referred to as *amambuka* (traitors) because they were seen to be rejecting the ways of their forefathers, as well as, their community. They literally ran away and settled in mission stations. "In the nineteenth century Christian converts tended by and large to be ex-slaves, outcasts from their society, refugees looking for a safe haven" (Hastings, 1994:61).

AmaXhosa refer to the Christian convert as *igqobhoka*. This term comes from the word *gqobhoza* that designates an act of piercing or opening a hole. From a Christian perspective, *igqobhoka* is someone who has been pierced and penetrated by the gospel. By contrast, developing a traditionalist perspective, Mndende (1998:9) describes *igqobhoka* as a container with a hole letting out what is good and valuable while letting in what evil and undesirable. She asserted that *amagqobhoka* are untrustworthy because they serve two masters. In her mind it is impossible for one to be loyal to both masters, and as such, she proposed that people have to choose which master to serve and then be loyal to that master. Her critical stance seemed to be motivated by what she regarded as double talk by *amagqobhoka*. They are like bats (*amalulwane*), she suggested, because one cannot make out whether they are mice or birds. On the ground they are as tricky and treacherous as mice but in the air they fly majestically as birds.

When they are among traditionalists, they profess to depend on the provisions of their ancestors for good health and fortune. But among Christians they profess dependence on the blood of Christ and the commands of the Bible.

Certainly, this traditionalist characterisation of *amagqobhoka* is highly derogatory. It emanates from feuds between the Red and School people (see Mayer 1971:24). As Mayer recounted, Red people “will speak of *ombolo mbini*, a ‘two sided’ person or *ilulwane*, ‘a bat’”. Mayer observed that in the Ciskei area there was a strong rivalry between the two groups. School people, many of whom were converts, saw themselves as embracing “civilisation” and being progressive while they saw Red people as anti-civilisation and anti-progress. They held onto useless traditions of the past. The rivalry between these two groups is an indicator that there was no uniform response to Christianity and modernity. The School people were willing to accept the Gospel with Western values that came with it, while the Red people wanted to incorporate elements of modernisation into their worldview. In other words, Red people wanted to have control over how Christianity and modernity were made part of their reality.

In IsiZulu the term for a convert is *ikholwa*, coming from the word *kholwa* (believe). *Ukukholwa* is to believe in someone or something, that is, *ngiyakholwa nguwe* (I believe in you or I have confidence in you or I trust you or I have faith in you). Moreover, *ukukholwa* has

connotations of loyalty and allegiance. Conversion to Christianity was considered as a betrayal to the group (the living and the dead), because it meant transference of loyalty and allegiance to the missionaries and colonial authorities. They instantly became enemies of the group and ceased to be *umuntu* (person or human being) in the eyes of the community. In the context of exchanges between Africans and missionaries there was rivalry. Both groups wanted to secure their material and intellectual interests. Therefore the act of going to the other side was seen as a serious violation as it exposed them to their rivals. Converts were thus called *amakholwa* or *amagqobhoka* not *abantu* (people, human beings). They were classified in the subhuman category. However, over time the term *ikholwa* has become accepted to mean someone respectable in the community. Ordinary Christians are proud to call themselves *amakholwa*. The meaning of this term has changed due to historical developments and the recognition of Christianity as an indigenous religion.

Inkolo is a term that AmaZulu gave to socio-religious changes brought about by the missionaries. During the twentieth century Christianity was perceived as part of a larger order, that included Western education, colonial administration, commerce and industry. For example, among the BaTswana,

the mission emphasized practical reconstruction, seeking to lay the basis for conversion by transforming the person through mundane activities of everyday life. ...Here they demonstrated

the utility of the plow and pump, preached the virtues of sober discipline, and installed the clock and bell to mark out routines and ensure that time was well spent. ...Here too, as the other side of their spiritual coin, they taught the value of the "varied treasures of commerce. ...and the supreme enabling power of money. (Comaroff, John L and Jean, 1987:195)

The word *inkolo* that is loosely used for religion actually means a *belief*. But what should we understand by the term "belief". After resisting conversion to Christianity for a long time, there were those who decided to affirm their belief in what the missionaries were advocating. Was this experience a *belief* in the Christian God or was it a belief in what one can materially achieve once one is a member of the new religion? Were people persuaded by the preached word and the efficacy of the new religion or by the idea of living in a square house or gaining access to "white power"? Ifeka-Moller suggested that "Christianity promised a new kind of power, the power of the white man, which people could use to discover the secret of his technological superiority" (1974:61). In Ikenga-Metuh's words "missionaries had access to and in many cases controlled a large proportion of the instruments of social change: schools, welfare services, and mass-media" (1987:24). It is these elements that attracted converts. In fact, "for most Africans conversion to Christianity is associated with securing access to modern skills and superior social status, rather than with developing homely virtues defined by dour, atavistic missionaries" (Beidelman, 1982:12).

As Simensen (1987) demonstrated the approach of most Norwegian missionaries among AmaZulu was to offer them gifts, show the efficiency of their medical technology, and offer humanitarian work where possible. This was against the directive from the Norwegian board to confine their work to preaching the word to the common people. Kirby (1994) recounted that in Ghana there was an unwritten policy that a missionary needed to establish development projects, build churches and clinics. These projects attracted the attention of Africans because they saw them as a means to advance themselves.

The term conversion implies an adoption of a different stance from the one that you had before. This means change into a new religion, which implies an adoption of new values, symbols, and a new worldview. Implied also is the notion of resocialisation. An individual or a group will be resocialised into a new reality. Resocialisation provides the convert with new lenses with which to see and interpret reality. These newly acquired tools are very important in the process of engaging with the world as well as self-definition in determining one's place in the world. Literature on the encounters between missionaries and Africans suggest that for the majority of missionaries Christian conversion required disowning African religious and cultural practices and then accepting Christianity together with Western cultural practices. Beidelman (1982:5) was of the view that missionaries were an important part of the colonial project. Furthermore,

Christian missions represent the most naïve and ethnocentric, and therefore the most thorough-going, facet of colonial life. ...Missionaries invariably aimed at overall changes in the beliefs and actions of native peoples, at colonization of heart and mind as well as body. Pursuing this sustained policy of change, missionaries demonstrated a more radical and morally intense commitment to rule than political administrators or businessmen.

Missionaries cast African culture, tradition and customs in a negative light. According to Simensen (1987:96),

Most aspects of Zulu culture came under the definition of sin, based not only on Christian but also on specific European cultural criteria. This naturally kept the cost of religious change high in terms of conflict with family and local society.

Among AmaXhosa in the second half of the nineteenth century, missionaries insisted that their members should have nothing to do with any of their traditional customs or they faced the possibility of being expelled. Mills (1995:165) pointed out that the missionary campaign against customs like circumcision (male initiation), *lobola*, *intonjane* (girl's puberty rites), and polygamy promoted "deception, breaches of discipline, disobedience of children and hypocrisy". For example,

Revd J.J.R. Jolobe said that he and his brothers had all, under the guise of visiting relatives, arranged to be circumcised and had been successful in hiding the fact to their father, Revd James Jolobe, did not learn about it until years later. Mr Zizi Mazwai said that he and his brothers had also quietly arranged operations at hospital, in spite of the Revd Ambrose Mazwai's denunciation of the custom (1995:165).

Simensen recalled another example of dishonesty by a man called Isaac as a result of an anti-African culture missionary policy. Isaac came to the mission station where he acquired business skills and became successful. He was baptised and confirmed into the church. After acquiring some wealth he decided to take a second wife.

One tempting opportunity to convert profit into status based on the criteria of Zulu society was to take several wives. At his cattle farm Isaac entered into a relationship with a girl who was to become his wife number two. To deceive Oftebro and the congregation he brought along this girl to Eshowe and registered her as a school pupil. He declared himself free from sin, and joined in Holy Communion as usual. When the truth was brought home to Oftebro through rumours and reports from other Christians, Isaac defended himself by pointing to the polygamous practice of Abraham and Isaac in the Old Testament. (Simensen, 1987:98)

Kirby (1994:60) reported that missionaries did not want to understand African religion, institutions, and culture. A veteran missionary told him not to bother learning native languages because he had to continue speaking English in order to help Africans improve their command of English. Christianity, as presented by the missionaries, carried with it a baggage of Western cultural practices and values, and these were presented to Africans as part of the furniture of Christianity.

Secondly, *ukuguquka* means re-turning. In the 1980s and 1990s, when Christianity was fully entrenched, the term *ukuguquka* was used

by Christians to mean turning away from evil as defined by Christian theology of their particular denomination. For Christians it also meant being enlightened, acquiring the knowledge of the “truth” that made them realise that their lives up to that point had been meaningless. During revival services at Presbyterian, Methodist and other black mainline churches, people stand up and declare that “*ndiyaguquka phansi kwelizwi elibekiweyo* (I convert in the light of the read text)”. In this context people’s intentions are to recommit and rededicate themselves to the project of the church. It is also an acknowledgement of new insights gained through the preacher’s exposition of a biblical passage. Others stand up to *hlaziya* (renew, revive or recommit) their membership to various church organisations or their faith. This type of discourse indicates that the conversion process is an ongoing, lifelong “turning” in which people keep on learning new things about their faith. Rather than signifying a dramatic change, *ukuguquka* in these Christian contexts represents an ongoing “re-turning” to the faith. Therefore, the majority of those who stand up to make such a declaration are confirmed members of their church who have heard the same text being explained before and have often renewed their commitment. This is a very important reinforcement strategy.

Finally, *ukuguquka* refers to the return of the prodigal sons and daughters of the church. These are individuals who for some reason abandoned the church by joining other churches or became inactive.

On their return they declare their commitment to the particular church and state the reasons why they have been away.

In many studies of conversion in Africa researchers have tended to follow a line of demonstrating how missionaries undermined and destroyed African belief systems, or the reasons for African conversion (a number of theoretical formulations), or the goodness of missionary intentions and their contribution to education and development in Africa. These studies paint Africans as passive in their Christianisation. None of them explain what Africans did to translate Christianity into their language and idiom, to organise their church structures in ways that are consistent with their religious, cultural and social beliefs. The leadership structures and church arrangements were consistent with acceptable and widely held beliefs and practices. Paul Landau (1995:xxi) in his research on Tswana Christianity, observed,

The Tswana activity of learning about Christianity and determining its social and political performance was then a series of collective and contradictory acts of creation. People took what was alien into familiar societal roles and frameworks, which they then transformed or exploded. They managed and developed the messy results, and elaborated new needs as old ones were met.

3.2. African performance

This process of translation resulted in many terms being given new meaning. *Inkonzo* means service, from the word *ukukhonza* (to render

service or to serve). This term has assumed new meaning in the context of Christian conversion; it means a Christian worship service (at times it is used to refer to a denomination, e.g., Methodist, Presbyterian, etc.). A typical Christian service includes singing, praise, prayer, and the preaching of the Word. The style of preaching has its roots in African praise-poetry and oratory. The voice of the preacher changes in ways that appeal to the emotions of the congregants. The delivery of the sermon resembles the delivery of a praise poem by *imbongi*. When *imbongi* sings praises to the king, celebrating his heroic achievements, people feel a sense of loyalty to the king as well as to the nation. A praise poet is an historian as well as a social critic. As "he reserves the right to criticise the chief or the people if he sees fit, a criticism designed to moderate excessive behaviour or to exhort his audience to emulate an ideal" (Opland, 1980:299). He would say who the king is in terms of his genealogy, say how he defeated his internal and external enemies, as well as adding criticism for wrongdoings and injustices. In this mixture of narration and analysis *imbongi* uses colourful language. The Xhosa *imbongi* performs a complex function in society. There exists an intimate bond between poet and chief: he usually forms part of the chief's entourage and announces the chief's arrival by declaiming his *izibongo*. The praise poem is a creative piece of work aimed at reinforcing loyalty to their king as well as instilling confidence and pride in themselves as a nation. Mazisi Kunene (1981:xi) aptly put it in that,

The Zulu poet (*imbongi*) when declaiming the heroic epics addresses the epics not only to the living but also to the dead. His poem is more than a frivolous comment on the heroic deeds of men and women; it is a cosmic address, a prayer to life, a celebration of the great accomplishments of all the generations of man. The individuals in the poem become symbols of a greater belief in the national ethic and in the continuity of life.

A sermon is a creative piece of work whose aim is to present Christ as a saviour. It is supposed to make converts resolute and steadfast in their beliefs as well as to convince those who fall outside "the grace of God" to accept Jesus as "Lord and Saviour". Most preachers are good orators. Even if what they say has little or no substance, people are impressed by the way they say it. In other words, a sermon, like praise poetry, is a performance that both informs and entertains. It is delivered in the praise-poetry style to make an impression on the audience. Like praise-poetry, preaching is a performance. It has to convince the audience that being part of the church is something good, while at the same time reinforcing people's commitment to the project of salvation. In a white church service, when the preacher speaks in an ordinary tone of voice, Africans tend to find it boring and uninspiring.

As a result of these different styles of performance, the unity of Black and White congregations within the same denomination is called in question. If one were to attend services in Black and White congregations of the same denomination one could easily come to a

conclusion that they were two different denominations. It is not only because of language difference but also because of the mode and style of worship. The formation of the Black Methodist Consultation in 1975 is a clear indication that Blacks in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa were feeling uncomfortable with the way things were being done and wanted things to change (See Balia 1994).

The sermon includes an explanation of a selected passage from the Bible, at times supporting it with other passages, including the application of the passage to contemporary situations, such as children who disobey their parents, people's obligation to care for the elderly, pre-marital pregnancy, the use of drugs, and so on. The sermon uses Black cultural experience to make sense of the biblical narratives. In this case the preacher uses phrases and idioms familiar to the people to get the message of the gospel across. In a normal Sunday service in a typical mainline church, one person from the pulpit delivers the sermon. The majority of these churches have an established tradition of lay preachers. This practice was necessitated by the fact that a single minister had to be responsible for a large area, making it impossible for him to be in all congregations at the same time. Lay preachers are very important in the life of the church because they provide spiritual leadership in the absence of the minister.

Preaching in a revival service (*imvuselelo*) is different. An appointed person opens the service and then opens a text (*abeke ilizwi*). This text will serve as a theme for the service. Everyone who stands up to preach has to speak within the confines of the set text. People bear testimony to the truth and authenticity of the text by offering their interpretations or their personal stories or what they have witnessed. Such stories are used to demonstrate that the Bible is alive. Although it might have been written thousands of years ago, it has contemporary relevance. Since the aim of *imvuselelo* is to revive people's faith, the telling of such stories helps to bring an understanding that at some point all people experience problems, whether financial hardships or difficult relationships. There is a particular way of giving a testimony or telling your story. New members learn from the old members how it is done. This mutual reinforcement is crucial to the formation of a congregation.

The term *ibandla* originally meant a congregation at *induna's* or *inkosi's* place. This congregation was empowered to discuss important social and political issues and to resolve disputes. In isiZulu there is a proverb which says *injobo ithungelwa ebandla* (a complex issue is shared with *ibandla* in order to find a solution). The collective wisdom of *ibandla* is confirmed by this proverb. The term was appropriated to mean a Christian congregation. In that appropriation, a term for dealing with this-worldly matters was transferred to other-worldly matters.

In the mainline churches it is common practice that individuals have "*ingoma yakhe*" (his or her favourite song/hymn). It is metaphorically referred to as "*induku yami*" (my stick). In African traditional societies men carried their sticks where ever they went, probably as a way of defending themselves against wild animals, as well as against attacks by enemies. In the contemporary Christian discourse, whether in the AIC or mainline churches, reference to warfare and enemies stresses the spiritual nature of the warfare that is why the practice of carrying a stick has been de-gendered. Women also have their sticks. In some Zionist Churches the idea of weaponry is taken very seriously and each member is given his or her own *isikhali*. This *isikhali* is of a symbolic nature but it has far reaching spiritual meaning. This particular song that is "my stick" is a major source of spiritual inspiration for the individual. As a result, in funerals of members it will be sung repeatedly.

3.3. Coercion and conversion

Jean and John Comaroff (1991) argued that the encounter between African religion and missionary Christianity was more of a conversation than conversion prior to the use of force by the settlers. Africans dialogued with the missionaries about religion to such an extent that there were aspects of African practice that were brought into the Christian church. The process of converting Africans was a

negotiation until settlers used force. Africans devised other mechanisms for dealing with Christianity.

Africans were generally tolerant of other points of view about reality. In Botswana among the GamaNgwato, for example, Kgosi Khama III initially "approached Christianity as if it were a variation of the practice of *dingaka* or priest-healers" (Landau, 1995:113). There was willingness to listen and understand what the missionaries and settlers had to say. As Opoku (1993:67) observed,

The tolerant attitude of African traditional religion towards other approaches of the Divine as well as to other interpretations of the origin and destiny of human beings bears out the truth of the proverb, that African traditional religion is a single person's hand which cannot embrace the totality of the divine wisdom and essence. And, since the divine truth is beyond the reach of a single religious tradition, wisdom recommends openness to truth, which comes from other traditions.

It was not the same with the missionaries because they saw themselves as God's servants with a mission to save souls, especially those of Africans. Racist notions about Africa also played a part in shaping their attitude to things that are African. Some of them did not think that they could learn anything from Africans. Etherington (1987) reported that Bishop Henry Callaway, a missionary among AmaZulu during the middle of the nineteenth century, initially tolerated and even valued African input and understanding of medicine. He knew his shortcomings and appreciated the knowledge of local specialists.

He was determined not to remove people from their comfort zones but to take the gospel to them, i.e., he believed in the power of the gospel to change people. The subsequent failure to have substantial impact on people's lives made him to question his earlier stance and he went on to endorse European attacks and occupation of land. The alleged superiority of European justice and religious purity was used to justify European domination. He saw British dominance of AmaZulu as the precondition to Christianisation, a view shared by Norwegian missionaries (Simensen, 1987:90-93). It is clear that Callaway had failed in his attempts to convert Africans through dialogue and now resorted to force. This was a pattern which missionaries embraced because it meant people have no political power and new forms of religious views could be imposed.

Simensen (1987:89) says that Norwegian missionaries concluded after a long time of persuading King Mpande of AmaZulu in the 1870s that the obstacle to Christianisation was Zulu independence. They then felt British sovereignty was a precondition for their mission. And as a result, a number of Norwegian missionaries took part diplomatically in the British conquest of 1879.

After the conquest of 1880 the missionaries received a new strong card in the transaction game in that they were given rights of property over considerable land areas around the stations. This attracted people in search of land and also made it possible to apply pressure for good purpose. On several

occasions parents who refused to send their children to school were threatened by eviction. (Simensen, 1987:91)

Zulu parents resisted sending their children to school because they feared that education was the first step to religious change. Parents' of sending their children to school was based on the fact that parents viewed education as part of the process of Christianisation, which in their minds was the same as Westernisation. One can argue here that it was not religious change that they feared but the whole package that was introduced alongside Christianity. The fear was that once their children tasted some of the things they would turn their backs on traditional norms and customs and be like whites.

However, Africans did not suddenly forget where they came from and who they were. There are those who quickly imbibed the new faith with its customs and fashion, and those who rejected it. In fact,

When people first settled on mission land, they often came more or less as outcasts willing to accept what was offered and the way it was offered. They were certainly not to be counted among the prosperous, Africa's natural polygamists. But as their ploughs multiplied and they grew richer and older, they thought and behaved increasingly like their non-Kholwa cousins. By 1871, six years after the opening of the sugar mill, Mvoti had so many polygamists that the missionary in charge was turning to government for assistance to drive them out. (Hastings, 1994:362)

Africans continued to practice some of their rituals albeit without the knowledge of the missionary authorities. Sacrifices would be

performed at night and feasts would be held during the day. These traditional rituals would be referred to as either “tea” or “dinner”. Many Christians were uneasy with the use of the traditional terms *umsebenzi* or *tirelo*, that is, “service”, because these terms (“tea” and “dinner”) were part of the missionary discourse.

4. Theoretical Considerations

It is clear by now that conversion is a complex category that bears different, contradictory meanings. Two broad schools of thought on conversion have been reviewed, *social-psychological* and *social-historical* approaches. In the case of social-psychological research on conversion we have focused on socio-rhetorical models (Snow and Machalek, 1983, 1984; Travisano, 1970; Staples and Mauss, 1987). The concern of this group of scholars is personal self-transformation. What triggers change in an individual? This model is helpful in trying to understand processes that lead to change at a personal level. The problem, though, is that it tends to isolate an individual from a broader socio-economic context.

There is a general consensus among scholars of conversion that it is not a once-off event, and that it involves socialisation into a new worldview. The socialisation process is particularly important because it introduces converts to the language and practice of the group. Language appears to be a crucial component of the conversion experience. It is through language that the message and vision of a

social group is carried. Thus, Snow and Machalek proposed that converts can be identified through their talk and reasoning. The socialisation process mediates change from one universe of discourse to another. The universe of discourse is socially constructed and owned by a social group. According to Wanamaker (1999), it is a broad interpretative framework by which reality is understood and experienced. It is a common system of meanings shared by the group. New members to the group are introduced to this body of knowledge, which is an important reference point for all members. It is that discursive framework which holds the group together. Specialised knowledge and discourse are important factors in giving a group its unique identity.

Since communities own the universes of discourse (Travisano, 1970: 600), they have strategies for managing the process of change. There are different kinds of strategies including myths, rituals, and traditions. These are mobilised to reinforce the legitimacy of the social group. They determine boundaries between one group and others, they are used to include and exclude, giving the group a distinct identity. No individual can claim to have completed this process because there is always room for learning new things. This is demonstrated in the use of the term *ukuguquka* (turning) by confirmed members in the mainline churches. For them the term signifies an acknowledgement of new insights gained through the

preacher's exposition of a biblical passage, as well as recommitment to the project of the church.

In considering *social-historical models* of conversion, we have focused on important contributions to the analysis of Christian conversion in Africa (Horton, 1971, 1975a, 1975b; Ikenga-Metuh, 1987; Hefner, 1993; Ranger, 1993; and Simensen, 1987). This group treats conversion as a socio-historical process. They insisted that conversion took place within a social, economic, political, and cultural context. As a historical process, conversion always involves continuity and discontinuity with the past. Setiloane (1978) demonstrates how the African traditional worldview was fused with Christianity. There was an exchange and negotiation between the two worldviews and the resultant faith reflects that exchange and negotiation. The history of Christian conversion in South Africa and the rest of Africa bears testimony to this fact. (Africans accepted something new in Christianity while holding on to some of their traditions) (Ranger, 1993:67). Mafeje (1975:172) observed this negotiated African Christianity in the township of Langa:

What we see in Langa are different phases of the same self-contradictory motion. Whether Zionist or high-Anglican, all Africans in Langa share an implicit belief in ancestor-cult and have held on with varying tenacity to their *amasiko*. They conduct circumcision rites for their boys, birth rites for their babies (*idinara yomntwana*, babies dinner party, which, fortunately coincides with baptism rites) and organise

commemoration dinner parties for their departed heads of families.

The theme of continuity-discontinuity has manifested itself in the way African churches, both mission and indigenous, are structured and conduct their business. It has manifested itself in the content of their worship and liturgy. It has also determined the broad framework for understanding conversion in African Christianity.

5. Conclusion

In thinking about conversion one has to consider the following factors: Firstly, conversion is a change in the universe of discourse, which can be sudden or gradual, that is precipitated by a complexity of issues. There is no one model that can sufficiently explain conversion. Emefie Ikenga-Metuh (1987) suggests a multi-causal approach that understands conversion to be as a result of a myriad of causes. Secondly, there has to be recognition that the convert is not passive in the process but an actor. Individuals make conscious decisions to commit to a group. They open themselves up for the experience by accepting approaches by those who introduce them to an alternative worldview. Persuasion is done through various ways, e.g., invitations to the gatherings of the group in order to observe its workings or listen to the accounts of others about the benefits of being a member of the group. Thirdly, there is a need to put in place a mechanism to determine whether one is converted or not. Snow and Machalek (1983, 1984) have provided the four rhetorical indicators to serve this

function. Staples and Mauss (1987) have pointed out the subjective nature of conversion and the need to take the converts accounts seriously. The accounts of converts should be subjected to a discourse analysis identifying ideological colouring in what they say. The assumption here is that converts are socialised into the new worldview, that is, into new ways of doing things and new ways of talking and reasoning. That should help in determining the conversion status of an individual. Finally, in the context of conversion in South Africa and the rest of Africa, the indigenous understandings of conversion have to be explored. The indigenous conceptions come out of a tradition of willingness to explore and accept other explanations of reality. Christianity was understood to be one other explanation in the market-place of ideas. There was acknowledgement that it had some elements of truth, but those who brought it had other ideas. Missionaries understood it to be the ultimate truth. Accordingly, they understood conversion as an all-or-nothing, you were either in or out.

Even during the missionary era, however, conversion was a two-way process. Simensen (1987) characterized conversion as a transaction; missionaries wanted converts and AmaZulu wanted to benefit from the advanced technology of the missionaries. Everyone involved in this exchange of values and material objects made concessions at some point in order to get what they wanted at a given time. In terms of religious beliefs, Christianity and African traditional religion developed macrocosmic and microcosmic orientations. The majority of

missionaries were interested in building local communities. As Jean and John Comaroff have demonstrated, missionaries got involved in local struggles over symbols and meaning. Thus they argued that conversion was more of a conversation or negotiation between Africans and the settlers. This negotiation ended up giving Christianity, which entered as a European phenomenon, a distinctively African flavour through processes of translation.

Bredekamp and Ross (1995:3) observed that the "history of Christianity in South Africa is a history of naturalization". This process was neither simple nor uncontested. Locals appropriated important Christian symbols and made them their own. As noted, Simensen (1987) spoke of a polygamous man called Isaac who used the Bible to justify why he had taken another wife. Isaac defended himself by pointing out that God used polygamous men like Abraham for his work. Hence Mosala (1986:108) asserted that the Bible is an *arena* of social conflict reflecting the socio-structural struggles of the societies that produced it. The process of appropriation is part of "African strategies for renegotiating meaning and power in a seriously disrupted world" (Chidester, 1988:85).

In this contest over local symbols and meaning, Africans taught missionaries how to adapt Christianity to a local idiom so that it might have some appeal to local people. Vincent Lucas, bishop of Masisi in

southeastern Tanzania was one of those missionaries who believed that Christianity had to adapt to local idiom in order to survive.

In his composite theology Lucas saw the great strength and gift of traditional religion in its capacity to sacralize local relations of hierarchy between the sexes, the generations, and the classes. Adapted Christianity had to learn from African religion how to do this, while itself contributing through its schools all that was necessary for those interactions with the outside world that could not be avoided. (Ranger, 1993:69)

Even though missionaries were strict on discipline and prohibited the bringing in of African tradition and culture, people nevertheless managed to fashion a Christian institution particular to Africa. It is important to note that Christianity among Black people in South Africa has an African flavour. Christian religion is made relevant in an African context.

Reformed Presbyterian and St John's represent the two broad groups within South African Christianity. Scholars have generally persisted in classifying churches in terms of the mainline or mission churches and African indigenous or independent churches. The dominant view at RPCSA is the idea of conversion as growth. The majority of members are recruited from the children of members. There is a strong youth development structure whose aim is to create a reservoir of future membership and leadership of the church. The expectation is that most of the children in the Sunday school and the Youth Fellowship would be confirmed into full membership of the church in future.

Among them will emerge future leaders, thus the saying *inkunzi isematholeni* (the bull is among the calves). By contrast, at St John's the dominant view is that of conversion as a result of a crisis. The bulk of the membership comes to the church because of a crisis in their lives. They come to church for healing services and after the experience of meeting other members often decide to join the church.

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CHAPTER 3

THE CRISIS MODEL FOR MANAGING CHANGE

1. Introduction

The majority of people who become members at St John's come as a result of a crisis in their lives. For most converts, turning to St John's is their last resort after having been to both Western and African medical specialists. Church leaders explain to them the source of their problem and then recommend ways of dealing with it. In the process of handling their crisis some of them decide to become members of the church. In other AICs the trend seems to be the same. A good example is that of the founder of the International Pentecostal Church (IPC), Father Frederick Samuel Modise, who went through terrible illness before starting the IPC. His son, the Rev. Clayton Modise, explained his father's conversion experience as a crisis.

He was in and out of hospital for three years, suffering from a mysterious disease the doctors could not diagnose. ...Doctors and nurses nicknamed him "spook-mathambo", a combination of Afrikaans and Nguni meaning "a ghastly skeleton". Doctors then told him that he had problems in his spine and he wore a back brace for two years. Then came the "miraculous" healing. One night a vision told him he would be healed on October 3 1962 (he had been admitted to hospital in 1959). The next day he amazed a nurse by getting out of bed without help and walking to the bathroom. Doctors said they had no idea what had healed him. But the Pastor knew. He said God had communicated with him, and to prove it it's said that he healed

15 patients by that day by laying hands on them. (*Drum*, no. 322, Nov. 1998:10-11)

Pretorius and Japhta (1997:223) reported that an estimated 80% of the ZCC following joined as a result of an experience of illness or some other trouble. In other words, they converted as a result of some form of crisis in their lives. Those who were influenced by family members or friends constituted 15%, and only 5% joined because they saw ZCC as an institution raised by God for the good of humanity. This chapter examines processes that converts go through in managing crisis in their lives.

2. Ritual

2.1. Rituals of incorporation: Baptism

Water is an essential part of Zionist practice. It is understood to have cleansing and purifying properties. It is primarily used on two occasions. Firstly, when someone is ill, water is used as a medicament to drink and to wash with. Secondly, it is used when a new member is initiated at baptism (Kiernan, 1990:106).

Through prayer, the latent life-giving qualities in water are activated. The use of water in Zion gives and revives spiritual force and power, which are essential for good health and participation in life enhancing activities. (Dube, 1994:109)

When the prophet/healer prays over water, it is instantly transformed into a medicament capable not only of dealing with physical ailments but also with anti-social spiritual forces bent on causing harm to the

client or the believer. The Holy Spirit is called upon to inject ordinary water with healing and cleansing power for the body and its environment.

Baptism is the formal way of conferring and confirming membership within the group. This is the first step towards acquiring identity as a member (Kiernan 1990:217). It is a mark (*uphawu*) which every member must have in order to be identifiable from non-members. Baptism is a way of inclusion and exclusion, drawing boundaries between those who are "inside" the faith community and those who are "outside". Every new member has to go through this ritual regardless of whether or not one was baptised in another church. In traditional African settings men put marks on their livestock as a way of identifying them from those of other men. This practice was encouraged as a way of avoiding quarrels over the ownership of livestock. In this case the church symbolically puts a mark on new members of the flock so as to be able to "find" them if they happen to get lost. There is a song sung at services which suggests that some members of the flock would get lost.

*Babuyise Nkosi Yethu,
Babuyise Nkosi Yethu,
Labo abalahlekile,
Babuyise Nkosi Yethu.*

Bring them back O Lord,
Bring them back O Lord,
All those who are lost,
Bring them back O Lord.

The Lord will be able to identify those "lost" by means of the mark of baptism and then bring them back to the community. Baptism is only

the beginning of a person's spiritual journey. After baptism, a person then will be guided by the church superiors to spiritual maturity.

St John's, like Zionists, only baptises adults through immersion, holding that complete immersion is "vital to salvation" (West, 1975:46). They call it the baptism of John the Baptist (Matthew 3). The importance of John the Baptist is highlighted as a central figure in the South African Zionist cosmos, personifying the pragmatic harnessing of divine power through the baptismal waters of the River Jordan (Comaroff, 1985:199). This form of baptism has a purifying effect on converts (Dube, 1994:109) making them ready to receive the spiritual guidance of the church leadership. Jean Comaroff took this further by suggesting that, "the baptism of the initiates dissolves former identities indexed in the corporeal body, and the circulation of water among the members of the church establishes a fluid unity of the spirit that cuts across the social and physical discontinuities of the neo-colonial world" (1985:201). Baptism at St John's incorporates new members into the group. It gives them a distinct mark that distinguishes them from non-members. They are purified of the dirt of their previous life. As they are immersed in water, their old identities are dissolved and they emerge with new identities.

After having been purified, one is open to the workings of the Holy Spirit. Rev. Jameson Mhlongo, the biographer of Archbishop P. J. Masango, reported that, "a voice came to Baba Masango instructing

him to be baptised in the river the same way as Jesus was baptised by John" (n.d:13). He further said that this baptism was very important in the prophet's life because it marked the beginning of his illustrious work as a prophet and a leader of St John's Apostolic Faith Mission. Baba Masango was taken to Ma Nku (also known as Mme Christina) because at that point he was very ill; Ma Nku baptised him and helped him to become a minister at St John's.

When someone feels that he or she is ready to be part of the church, a public declaration has to be made in front of the whole congregation. This practice is also common among mainline and revivalist churches. Converts are asked to come forward and make a public declaration of their newfound faith. They are asked in a Sunday morning service to come forward and kneel in front of the altar and one of the senior leaders will ask them whether they want to join the church and they will have to respond by saying yes. After this dialogue the leader will then welcome them and lead the rest of the congregation in song, shaking the new members' hands and a date will be set for baptism.

On the day of baptism all members are expected to come to church very early in the morning where a service in preparation for baptism will be held. Then they will proceed to the sea where new members will be baptised. After the baptism of new members, it is the turn of *isiwasho* (cleansing), the immersion of those who have illnesses and afflictions. In this practice, St John's follows the Zionist tradition of

linking baptism with rituals of purification. As Chidester has summarised,

On certain occasions, rituals of healing took the form of purification rites, performed at rivers, lakes, or ocean, that utilised the spiritual power that Zionists associate with. Every Zionist had been baptized by triple immersion, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so water was regarded as a special medium for transmitting spiritual power. Although rituals of purification might have resembled baptism, involving invocation of the spirit of immersion in water, they specifically addressed toward restoring an individual's purity and health. Furthermore, the spiritual cleansing achieved through rituals of water was connected with the power of water to expel impurity from the body. (Chidester, 1992:141-142)

The senior leader communicates the expectations of the group to the new members. Women are told that if the day of baptism coincides with their menstrual period they should not be baptised or they risk endangering themselves and those conducting the ceremony. Women at that point are seen to be ritually unclean and therefore not fit for something as important as baptism. In African traditional thought,

Though the menses were the source of children, so that the menses could be beneficial, usually during their menstrual periods women were a constant threat of danger. In this condition they could spoil the magic, blight the crops, kill cattle, and rob the warrior of his strength and the hunter of his skill. Terrible ills afflicted a man who had intercourse with a menstruating woman. (Gluckman, 1963:115)

The ambivalent attitude towards women in African traditional thought is carried over into the church. At one level women are desirable as

conduits of life to the world, but at another level they pose a ritual threat which necessitates their exclusion.

Blood has both “beautiful” and “ugly” attributes. The sacrificial blood and the blood of Christ have positive salvific qualities. Through this blood people get a life; people are saved from their sins. Thus blood is able to cleanse and purify (Hebrews, 9:14). On the other hand, the attitude to menstrual blood is ambivalent. Firstly it is a given that it is life giving but it is perceived to be ugly– dangerous and polluting. Contact with it is understood to be dangerous, especially during ritual times.

At the sea-side the senior male leader warned the people of the dangers of the sea. At the sea-side people prepared themselves for baptism by putting on appropriate clothing. All new members were advised before-hand to bring with them silver coins to throw in the sea as a way of appeasing it not to take them. Another service starts at the sea-side led by a senior male leader because baptism can only be performed by male leaders. A senior female leader watches as her juniors perform this important ritual. In cases when a senior female leader has to have *isiwasho*, it is her juniors who put her through it. The authority of a female leader is undermined at such events. However, Mrs Melusi does not have a problem with this practice because *ngumthetho* (it is the law of the church). New members were asked to have their coins ready and then they proceeded to the sea.

The leader went into the sea to bless it so that it could serve its function of cleansing and renewing. According to Sundkler (1961:206) "whether it is a matter of baptism or of other purification rites, the water must be prepared by prayer to make it efficacious". The leader threw in a coin before performing the blessing. Each new member had to throw in the coins just before they were immersed. A new member would be held by the leader and then immersed in the water three times in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Oosthuizen (1992) observed that for Zionists the sea symbolises the presence of numinous powers and those powers could be very dangerous if approached without due process and understanding. The reason why the leader walks in first and consecrates the sea is to appeal to the divine powers not to endanger those who come for the baptism. At this point the chaotic and dangerous water of the sea is tamed and changed into a constructive and healing force. The silver coins thrown in are a way of appeasing these powers. People were warned that they needed to be sure of their decision to become members and be baptised because if they were not sure the sea might get "angry" and "take" them. People are also warned not to bring anything unclean or they risk being taken by the sea.

In some Zionist churches people are asked to confess their sins before being immersed in water (Hostetter, 1994:251; Kiernan, 1990b:70). That is part of the cleansing process and the person, by confessing, would be forgiven. The act of immersing them in water would be a

symbolic washing of the sins. After all new members have been baptised and those needing *isiwasho* have been immersed the service would be closed and people would then go back to church where a normal Sunday service would be held.

In Cape Town and areas along the coast people use the sea for baptism but people in inland areas can use rivers and lakes. In either case, baptism must be performed in running water. Running water is significant in that it does not keep the dirt but lets it go away. Another innovation in this regard is the use of a swimming pool. In Germiston and Lesotho there are pools within the church property whose sole purpose is baptism and *isiwasho* (John 5:4). The blessing of children is performed at major festivals after the baptism and *isiwasho*. Such a practice is based on the verse in the Gospel of Mark (10:13-16) in which Jesus blesses children by laying hands upon them.

Another important factor about membership is the uniform. Baptism is the only requirement for membership. There are no formal confirmation classes. A new member learns what he or she needs to know from the teachings of the leader during services as well as from older members. The colours of the church are Blue and White. Every member has to have a blue and white belt, which they put across their bodies to be clipped on the side. Mr Move, a minister, called this belt *ibhanti ka Johane* (Saint John's belt). This belt distinguishes St John's from any other church. Men are expected to have white coats (same as

doctor's coats). Women's uniform is much more complex. It is a blue skirt, a white blouse, and a white cap. The designs of women's uniforms are determined by the church, and usually there is someone who makes these for church members. Some leaders, especially females, are very particular about the appearance of members' uniforms.

The theme of crisis management is observable in the ritual of baptism at St John's. First, the motive for turning to St John's is a crisis in an individual's life. Second, through baptism an individual's old identity is dissolved and a new one emerges. Finally, through *isiwasho* recurring crisis is managed. Therefore, the conversion of an individual is linked through this ritual to ongoing management of crisis in the community.

2.2. Rituals of celebration

2.2.1. Daily Services

The typical day at St John's starts at 5am with a prayer service called *Rea u boka Morena* (We thank you O Lord). The service is meant to thank God for enabling people to see another day, giving thanks for the privilege of life and all the gifts and blessings bestowed upon them. There are two prayer services for those who are ill at 11am and 3pm. The last prayer of the day is at 7pm at which people thank God for the day and the protection He gave them against all sorts of dangers seen and unseen. Time is of the essence at St John's.

According to Mr Emogu, Baba Masango taught that services should start and end on time because angels are punctual; they are there at 7 and leave at 8. If people let their services drag beyond the time they are supposed to end, their requests will not be conveyed to God. Angels play a crucial role as carriers and conveyors of messages from people to God and vice versa. They look after people and help them overcome their troubles.

The major service is on Sunday morning. There are prayer services during the week in which the same service format is used but there are different emphases everyday. The service starts off with the service leaders shouting "*thusong*" (a place of help). This brings to everyone's attention the fact that the service is starting. The opening prayers are said and the service leader directs the congregation in reciting the Lord's Prayer. It is important to note that people use Methodist service books for the service. West (1975:27) also noted that in Soweto some AICs used these service books and those of other mainline churches. After opening prayers people stand up to sing a chorus:

<i>Ngena nathi,</i>	Start (the service)with us,
<i>O msindisi ngena nathi,</i>	O mighty Saviour start with us,
<i>Asinawo amandla okungena sodwa,</i>	We have no power to start on our own
<i>O msindisi ngena nathi.</i>	O mighty Saviour start with us

The service leader constantly refers to the three candles, the God of Baba Masango, Ntate Moloi, Mme Anna (Mrs Masango), and Mme Christina (Mrs Nku). Candles are lit day and night in the church;

when one goes out it is quickly replaced. This is a way of asserting St John's as a distinct entity from other churches, by demonstrating that they have a history with founders and prophets. These prophets, like the ancestors, intercede on behalf of the living and also give direction where there is none.

The service leader reads from the Bible the text of the day, and comments on it. He or she would make the text clear by applying it to the situation of the congregation. This is a common practice among African churches, both mission and independent. The next step is to give ordinary members of the congregation an opportunity to support the text through their testimonies. Some people use this opportunity to share with the congregation their problems or what God had done for them or ask that the congregation should remember them in their prayers. People's testimonies serve to encourage those who are new.

After thirty minutes the service leader intervenes and transfers the service from *ebantwini* (ordinary people) or *esizweni* (the nation) to the altar where the ministers and other high officials sit. The leaders offer a summary of the message. The most senior leader uses such an opportunity to explain the rules of the church and how things need to be properly done.

The next phase in the service is devoted to the drinking of holy water. West (1975:94) observed that "the other very important way of healing

during church services is by giving holy water to the congregation to drink. Here a distinction is made between healing and purification". The senior leader formally blesses water with the help of some assistants. It is then poured in small plastic cups and given to people who are standing in a queue. As a person finishes drinking he or she gets a blessing from the senior leaders in the form of a pat on the head with an iron rod. The beginning of this phase is marked by the singing of the hymn:

Se teng seliba sa mali

There is a lake of blood

Alerateng ea tefelo.

In the altar of atonement.

Liba see e leng sehlare;

The lake which is a medicine

Matl'a sona ke bophelo.

Its power is life

This is a song by S. Rolland taken from the SeSotho Methodist Prayer Book Hymn number 172. It has five verses but only the first verse is used. It is sung repeatedly until everyone has had a sip of holy water. Emphasis is placed on the first verse because it reflects concern with addressing the crisis. The phrase "the lake which is a medicine", reflects on the healing properties of water. It impresses upon the members the medicinal capacity of water.

Some people bring water in containers to be blessed in order to heal their ailments. These are placed outside in the quad called *ichibi* (the lake) to be attended to by the senior leader after everyone has had their holy water. The senior leader blesses water and then returns inside to join the congregation. This practice is contrary to some Zionist groups in which water is brought inside the circle and prayed

over. When the leader returns from outside, it is time for the offerings. Members walk from their seats to the offering plate next to the altar. Following the offerings, announcements are made and the service is closed.

2. 2. 2. Amathwasa

Amathwasa takes place every first weekend of the month and usually precedes baptism. All those who are due to be baptised are expected to attend this all night vigil. Some of the participants are people who have a “gift” of healing and this vigil is aimed to help them along. This service is consistent with African traditional practices for initiates (*amathwasa*) to make sacrifices to relevant ancestors. Initiates and other people bring to the church animals and birds for sacrifice. Sacrifices are done at night before the service begins.

The actual service is run along the same lines as the other services. There is a lot of respect for authority, as such the highest ranked person in the room must have the final say in the service. This practice is consistent with how meetings were run in traditional African settings, where the person in authority would make the final ruling on the matter after deliberations by the ordinary members of the meeting. The final ruling by the authority figure will be respected and implemented by those at that meeting. At St John's senior leaders are regarded as having more spiritual understanding and they are

qualified to have the last say on any matter relating to scripture and spiritual growth. Therefore, they have the final say in the service.

Before the formal proceedings people sing choruses and dance. It is clear that they enjoy what they do. The senior leadership appoints a service leader who directs the service through the early formalities and acts as a master of ceremonies. In cases where there are many ministers in attendance, one of them will be asked to lead the service, usually one of the junior ministers.

In the ceremony that I attended in Khayelitsha, the minister in charge led the congregation in the recitation of the Lord's prayer in IsiXhosa and SeSotho. Probably this is an acknowledgement of the Church's SeSotho origin or an acknowledgement of the contributions made by the BaSotho in the development of the church. The service leader proceeded to read from the Bible and then preached. After preaching he gave very clear instructions that he would now take the service and hand it to the ordinary people. So he said, "*Ngoku ndinikela inkonzo ebantwini okanye esizweni*" (Now I hand over the service to the people or to the nation). He warned them to take their chances very quickly because they do not have much time. People from the floor stood up and gave their testimonies and commented on the text. After two hours the service leader gave a signal that time was running out for the people. Eventually he stood up to announce that he was now transferring the service to the leadership. Leaders started sharing

according to their rank until the most senior. After the last word from the senior leader people drank holy water. Water drinking was followed by offerings. Then it was the closure of the service and people had something to eat. This was about 4am and people had a break before a trip to the beach for baptism. Transport was organised and leaders collected transport money from everyone. At 6.30am people left for the beach where baptism took place. After baptism people returned to their homes to have a bath and a change of clothing for the Sunday service that was followed by the feast. Women of the church had the task of preparing all the food. Each person who brought a fowl for a sacrifice had to bring some vegetables and rice. People then left after having been fed.

During *amathwasa* some individuals make sacrifices. There are two types of people who make sacrifices, those who do it as thanksgiving for healing or resolution of their problems, and those who are initiates who are doing it due to an instruction from the ancestors via either the prophet-healer or a dream. In cases of big sacrifices like sheep or cows, an individual has a bath with the contents of the stomach of the beast (*umswane*) mixed with its blood and bile. Such a sacrifice is meant to appease the ancestors and grant the individual concerned more ability to divine and help people (*asebenzele abantu*). Traditional initiates also had similar sacrifices that were performed either at the initiate's home or that of the mentor. At St John's such sacrifices are exclusively performed at the healer's compound or church. It is

common among the AICs to appropriate and modify African practices. *Amathwasa* and sacrifices that go with it are such a development. Kiernan (1992) observed the same kind of appropriation by Londa Shembe, the leader of AmaNazareth, when he centralised the puberty rituals of Zulu girls to his headquarters. The feast after the Sunday service is an important community-building strategy.

The perception of time at St John's reflects a sense of urgency, which is a sense of being on crisis-alert. First, services are supposed to start and end on time because angels can only be there for that hour. If people are not punctual, they will miss the blessings brought by angels or angels will not be able to take their petitions to God and the crisis will persist. Second, at services people are urged to testify while there is time. By implication, if people do not take their chances they will end up regretting it. Even at night vigils, where there is more time, similar warnings about the limitedness of time are given. The service leader periodically stands to warn people of time running out. There is no unlimited supply of time. Therefore, time is crucial in the management of crisis.

2.2.3. Imigidi (festivals)

There are three *imigidi* (festivals) per year (excluding Good Friday and Easter), namely *umgidi wezinkwa* (festival of bread), *umgidi wabaprofethi* (festival of prophets), and *umgidi wamahlabelo* (festival of sacrifices). Good Friday and Easter are also national festivals

celebrated at the headquarters. Members from all around the country assemble at the church headquarters for *umgidi*. Each takes a week during which people have to keep themselves pure by not engaging in activities that might defile them. These include not engaging in sexual intercourse. Hence, men and women are housed separately. Mrs Melusi stressed that the church headquarters is a holy place and it would be inappropriate for people to engage in such behaviour. She went so far as to say that even if the wife and husband share accommodation outside of the church compound they are ordered to abstain for the duration of *umgidi*. Sexual intercourse would defile them, thus putting other people in danger of not being able to get healing. This is a holy time and people bring their problems to the leadership of the church and ask for prayers. On the seventh day the sacred pool (situated in the property of the church) is consecrated and baptism, *isiwasho* and the blessing of children take place.

The St John's church is divided between those who recognise the Bishop of Johannesburg as the national leader of the church and those who recognise the Bishop of Lesotho. This split happened after the death of Archbishop Petros Masango. During major festivals people either go to Johannesburg or Lesotho. New members are encouraged to make an effort to go on pilgrimage in order to see the national leadership of the church and experience the church as the national Church.

Germiston (Katlhlong, Baba Masango's headquarters), Lesotho (another place developed by Mme Anna), and Claremont (Mme Anna's Temple which is near Pinetown in KwaZulu-Natal) are three major sites of spiritual and historical significance at St John's. Ministers go on retreat to these centres, the aim being to attain spiritual renewal as well as counsel by religious superiors. The importance of submitting to the authority of superiors is always highlighted, thus reinforcing the hierarchical structure of the church community.

3. Tradition

3.1. Ecclesiology

Mrs Melusi described St John's as *inkonzo ejulile, inkonzo yabaprofethi* (a very deep and intricate church, a church of the prophets). This is a very important description because it says that this church is different from other churches. It also says that this church is anointed by the Holy Spirit, which led the founder to start it. After its founding there have been numerous prophets around South Africa who have helped people. The sentiment about this being the church of the prophets is very clear in the way people understand God. In their prayers, sermons and testimonies members refer to God as the God of the prophets; Baba Masango, Mme Anna, Mme Christina, Ntate Assah, Ntate Moloi, Ntate Matsoso, and others. Mr Emogu went as far as to use strong words to correct some members of the congregation who did not address God "properly"; he said, "Some of you are new here and very young at St John's. You do not have a

God. You are just nothing. Only the prophets have a God. Let us do things the proper way or we risk being the laughing stock of other people". This a good example of where new members were strictly told not to claim God for themselves but acknowledge that it is the God of the prophets. In his book, *Umprofethi wodumo* (n.d.) Rev. Jameson Mhlongo, talks about God as *uNkulunkulu wabaprofethi* (God of the prophets).

Prophets, like the ancestors, are seen as mediators between the people and God. Makhubu (1988:59) noted that,

The custom of not approaching the king or any senior person directly, creates the mental attitude with which an African would approach God. No ordinary man could talk to a king face-to-face. This was considered to be extremely disrespectful, and carried a heavy fine, or the death penalty, depending on circumstances. In the same way God cannot be directly approached; someone must act as a go-between.

The designation of prophet includes both the biblical prophets as well as those who were responsible for the founding and growth of St John's. Prophets are "gifted" people with a message that would help transform people's lives. However, prophets are not the final authority but mere conduits for the message of God. Talking about God this way characterises Him to be the God of history. He is not only historical but He was active in history, shaping St John's to be what it is today through messages and revelations given to His prophets at different times in history. Rev Mhlongo was at pains throughout his book to

say that all the revelations to the prophet (Masango) have come to pass. Because of all this evidence of reliability, people can trust his God.

Rev. Mhlongo further pointed out that *"lenkonzo ngeyabantu abagulayo kanti akukho muntu ongena kuyo ngokuyithanda kepha yinkonzo yobizo"* (this is a church for the ill and troubled people no one joins it because they like it but they follow their call) (n.d.:13). For example, Mrs Malowe did not like becoming a member of the church. Her illness was so severe that she was willing to do anything to get relief. She said,

I was very sick from (*ufufunyane*) spirit possession. I was suicidal and could not fall pregnant. I went to many doctors psychologist, psychiatrist in Baragwanath Hospital in Johannesburg. The doctors said I was suffering from chronic depression. Then in 1995 I had a dream, four women appeared in it wearing St John's clothes, blue and white saying, "When are you coming to St John's?" I then asked people where the nearest St John's is. I went there told the leader who informed me that I was gifted in healing and told me that I was bewitched. I was steamed, bathed and given a strong enema for some time and later I got healed. I was baptised, robed with blue and white; now I am in a process of being robed with a blue cape, navy gown because my leader discovered that I am gifted in healing. (Interview 8)

The above example and the statement by Mhlongo highlight the centrality of healing in St John's practice as well as the fact that the church responds to crises in people's lives. The theme of healing and

helping people with their problems is an organising theme of Bishop P.J. Masango's biography. It starts with his own illness, how he was healed and ends with how he healed others.

3.2. Recruitment

Healing is at the heart of the recruitment strategy at St John's, as well as other African initiated churches. In fact,

The relevant approach and the implication of healing by the church encourage those who are cured of their disease to become members of the church. To them, the church has given life. The church becomes the refuge of its successful handling of both physical and psychological troubles. It addresses and meets specific needs and people feel protected, safe and well cared for. Hence the headquarters of the church becomes a place of rescue. (Maboea 1994:124)

In conversion narratives people relate that they came to St John's as the last resort after having tried everything but after having been "washed" here they are well again. It is common practice at St John's for all those who are ill to have a bath administered in church by the leader of the group or someone nominated to do so. This, in part, serves to cleanse them of all the uncleanness and to remove *isinyama* or *umgqwaliso*. *Isinyama* creates an invisible dark veil around a person, which in the end lends him to misfortune and a whole lot of other problems. It also gives other unclean spirits space to negatively affect this individual.

Others say that they were pointed to this church by *isinyanya sakokwethu* (ancestral power or spirit) because they had *ingulo emhlophe* (white illness) or *ukufa kwabantu* (African diseases) (Oosthuizen, 1992:86). This is an illness that all prospective healers have. They then have to undergo *ukuthwasa* or *intwaso* (initiation) in order to become healers. People undergo training under an experienced healer who serve as a mentor and guide. People who suffer from *ingulo emhlophe* experience problems because they have all sorts of ailments that could not be healed by anyone else but someone at St John's.

When Miss Thobe was asked about why she joined this church her response was that her family belongs to the Methodist church and each time she went to that church she felt uneasy and wanted to cry. She ended up not attending church regularly until she was asked by a friend to come with her to St John's and she felt comfortable. It was then explained to her that her spirit was somehow stifled in her previous church and here it would be allowed to flourish. She is also gifted spiritually so she would get all the help and support she needs to develop and grow in spirit. She can become a healer after receiving training. She is possessed by an ancestral spirit that wants to use her to help other people.

The concept of illness is very broad, it does not only concern physical and psychological disorders, but includes general misfortune as well.

Therefore, unemployment, marital problems, family problems, financial problems and so forth are part of the definition of illness. Healing therefore, is "the totality of activities and ideas meant to correct or alleviate such disorders or, ...to reconstitute physical, social and spiritual order" (Schoffeleers, 1991:2). In other words, healing does not only cure physical illness but it restores self-confidence and reaffirms human dignity. Thomas (1994:52) observed a young man who on his arrival at St John's was reserved and withdrawn but through interaction with others as well as participation in rituals, he became more confident, rose up the church hierarchy, found himself a job. It is apparent that participation in the healing activities and being involved with the church community restored his sense of self worth, and enhanced his self-confidence. Thomas further pointed out that the community credited the change in the boy's position to a supernatural source.

The healing ministry takes place "within the traditional African view of the world as permeated by good and bad spirits" (Pretorius and Japhtha, 1997:223). According to Kunnie (1992:2),

Traditional healing as practised by such churches represent an attempt at re-claiming an indigenous historical religio-cultural tradition which had been defamed by the colonial rulers and dismissed by European missionaries as "superstitious nonsense" or even described as "prelogical" by so-called anthropological scholars and experts such as Levi Strauss. (1992:2)

According to this world-view nothing happens by chance, fortune, or fate (Berglund, 1989:109), the principle of cause-and-effect operates. Illness is understood in terms of breaches in socio-ethical and moral codes or as the work of the anti-social forces. The healing process does not only deal with the individual but also deals with the environment in which the individual is. For clients it means that their homes will have to be rid of these evil spirits and be protected from further attacks. In other words, an evacuation ritual would have to be done by the healer or his or her appointee.

The perceptions of power and efficacy of healing administered by the church draw people to the church. In fact, "successful and powerful prophets are very important for the popularity and success of individual churches they attend because their healing services are much in demand" (Johnson, 1994:171). Maboea (1994:123) also suggested that,

Many people attended African Independent Churches not primarily to worship God, but to be prayed for. Problems which patients regularly ask for prayers include protection, security, marriage disputes, stability, bareness, prosperity, joblessness and family problems.

As a matter of fact, not all people who are healed in the church become members. Some come only for the healing and cleansing part and attend other churches for their other spiritual needs. Some maintain a relationship with the church and when they have problems

they approach the church for help. It is, however, important to note that,

Healing activities in the Zionist churches are not an end in themselves. The message is in fact the strongest asset of Zionist evangelisation. Heathens and Christians from mission and Ethiopian churches are attracted in various degrees by the sweeping promises made, and the more so as the Zionist belief in healing is supported by alluring testimonies which witness to the supposed fact that the cure has indeed brought with it positive results. (Sundkler, 1961:233)

This point is taken further by Kiernan (1990:3) who argued that in Zionist churches "conversion assumes considerable importance when it is recalled that ...only a tiny proportion of those who belong are born members".

There are also those who attend services for the sake of healing but do not commit themselves to the church. They still maintain their church membership in another church. Mrs Xhanti pointed out that in her church she gets all the spiritual nourishment and support but lacks healing. She is here to get that for her life to be complete. This is a very interesting way of managing spiritual resources. This person has a need, which her church cannot fulfil and therefore she decides to find it somewhere else. In her mind there is no conflict or contradiction

The attraction at St John's is the ability of the church to deal and minister to the crisis situations in which people find themselves. The church also allows them new spiritual avenues, which were not available to them in the mainline churches. Mrs Melusi (a leader at St John's) had this to say:

Here we cater for all your needs. You can come as a sick person, we will heal you; You come with a white illness we will put you through the training programme and you won't have problems; You come to us being troubled by evil spirits and witchcraft, we help you fix that; You come with a problem with *isinyanya*, we deal with it. You come to us unable to get children or not finding a job or having problems in your present job or looking for promotion, we will help you. (Interview 1)

In this case one is not only promised spiritual support but also support in dealing with material reality. Mrs Melusi knows very well that the majority of people who come to her church come primarily because they have a problem or they experience some crisis in their lives. She does not give any complicated theological arguments for these people's attendance other than that they need help, and it is their duty as servants of God under the guardianship of Baba Masango to offer these people help. It is, however, hoped that once people are well they will then join the church but it is not always the case.

There are those people who suffer from *ingulo emhlophe* (possession by ancestral spirits or having a gift of prophesying and healing). At St

John's they are helped through the initiation stage to a stage in which they are healers on their own. As part of their training they stay in the residence of the leader (which happens to be where the church is). They are expected to help with the preparation of the church for daily prayers and other services, prepare water and other medicaments on Wednesdays and Saturdays, help bath and pray for those who have problems as well as ordinary household chores. They are taught how to diagnose people's problems and various ways of helping them. After this intensive training they are free to go and establish their own congregations or to stay on and help the leader as before.

The process of diagnosing the problem follows the same lines as that of the traditional divination process. The diviner communicates with the spirit world in coded language and then has to decode that for the client. The client together with the diviner will unscramble all the messages and make sense in the context of the client's problem. In fact, "dysfunction of the body implies disruption of the harmony between physical, social and moral being, and it sets in motion the search for reconstitution" (Comaroff, 1981:369). After dealing with all these messages and identifying the problem and its source, the diviner would then suggest various ways of dealing with the problem. Peek (1991:203) asserted that,

The divination process reviews all known factors as well as bringing forth new knowledge of the client's problem. The characteristic randomisation of divination's presentation of

these relevant elements neutralises them so that each can be closely scrutinised, so that the true and the false can be clearly distinguished. ... The diviner must mediate between traditional ideals and current realities, old and new, private and public, this world and that world.

The most crucial stage in the divination process is the dialogue generated by the message, which the diviner receives. The client asks for clarity on a number of issues raised when the diviner was in communication with the ancestral powers. Peek further suggested that the aim of divination is "to move participants out of their mode of thinking, shaking them up in order to change their minds because their current understanding of the situation is inadequate" (1991:205).

The point has to be made that in the AICs a distinction is made between what traditional specialists do and what prophets do. They maintain that while traditional specialists depend on ancestral powers for their divination exercises, in AICs "it is the Spirit who works through the prophets, offering solutions to people's problems in life" (Ndiokwere, 1981:94).

According to Johnson (1994: 166) "prophets are 'called' to become healers, a decision that does not come from the ego of the individual. Rather, this is a calling that comes to the healer from other sources or powers greater than the ego of the individual". Some people try to resist this call until they get seriously ill. Ma Nku received visions and

signs that she must be a prophet, and at some point she became seriously ill, the same with Mrs Melusi. She had indications as a child but ignored them until she was very ill and her family took her to Baba Masango who realised that her time to start “working” was overdue and organised that she be baptised quickly and start the process of becoming a healer. The leader of a congregation must be able to help those who have problems. He or she must be able to diagnose people’s problems and help them deal with what bothers them. The process of examination and diagnosis is called *ukuhlahluba*. At St John’s they do not use the term *ukuhlola* (to examine) which is commonly used by traditional healers. It is possible that they avoid it to show that what they are doing is different from what traditional healers do. Another possibility is that because of the church’s SeSotho origin they are using the SeSotho term *tlahloba* (to examine).

During this process the healer “looks” into the life and history of the client and determines what is wrong and what is the cause(s) of that problem. The client is free to ask questions, raise objections or even confirm what the healer says. From diagnosis the discussion moves to finding ways of dealing with the source of the problem (some people would leave after getting clarity about the diagnosis). The healer would suggest to the client to come on Wednesdays and Saturdays for *insebenzo*. The client is charged a fee for *ukuhlahluba*.

The healing and cleansing process is normally referred to as *ukusebenzela abantu* (doing work for people). When dealing with people's problems one is at war with the forces of darkness and as such one has to be strong spiritually. One would not be effective if one lacks any of the power necessary to deal with the problem. If it happens that one participates in this process while one is ritually unclean, there could be serious consequences for the client. Therefore, participants in the process must be ritually clean as well as spiritually mature to be able to deal with the forces of darkness.

3.2.1. Stages of accepting a call

An individual is diagnosed by a healer that he or she has a gift of healing. Healers advise their clients about how to deal with that reality. Clients are warned to take the diagnosis seriously or face persecution by spiritual powers. In cases of those who have ailments, the healer informs them that recovery would only come after the acceptance of the call. There are several stages that are followed in accepting a call at St John's.

Firstly, *ukuvuma ukufa* (accepting the gift of being a healer). The gift of being a healer is called *ukufa* (can mean illness or death) or *ukugula* (illness), the reason being that it manifests itself as an illness and the person concerned suffers affliction. The use of death as a metaphor for the gift is rooted in traditional African thought. In death people become ancestors. Ancestors have the ability to see into the past and

into the future. They are not constrained by human flesh. Once an individual becomes a healer he or she acquires some of those qualities possessed by the ancestors. The ability to operate in the spiritual realm is acquired.

If a gifted person refuses to accept the responsibility of being a healer he or she can suffer badly or even die. The afflicted person will start feeling relief from illness after the occasion called *imvuma kufa*, which is an acknowledgement and acceptance of the gift and the eventual responsibility of being a healer. Here, *ithwasa* (initiate) is giving an undertaking that she or he will go under the guidance and tutelage of an experienced healer to acquire what is necessary to be a fully-fledged healer. The major pre-requisite at St John's is that a potential healer should be committed to the church and its ways of healing, a commitment to use water and no herbs and other concoctions. One would then be put in a situation where he or she encounters sick people and helps them to come to terms with their problems and get better. A beast is slaughtered for this occasion and it is called *imvuma kufa*.

Secondly, *ukuvulelwa inhlahlubo/iBhayibhile* (opening of the divining Bible). The Bishop is the only one with the authority to confer this responsibility. The client still works under the guidance and supervision of the spiritual mentor/parent (*umzali womoya*). The initiate is given opportunities to *hlahluba* people. During the training

period the initiate is supposed to help in the mentor's place giving the sick baths, enemas and other duties according to need. The initiate must learn the procedures and methods used in the church to help those in need.

Finally, *ukwembeswa ingubo yobufundisi* (being robed a ministerial dress). This is ordination as a minister. It is only the Bishop, during major national festivals, who can do the robing of ministerial dress. All those who would be robed have to travel to the church headquarters. The major responsibility that any new minister has is to start a church community, probably at one's home. This involves recruiting people who will form the nucleus of this community. Then one would preside over all services and healing events in the community. Another important responsibility is to socialise new members into how things are done at St John's.

3.3. Reinforcement

Since the dominant paradigm at St John's is crisis, the reinforcement strategies are built around combating it. The most significant form of reinforcement comes in the form of testimonies during the services. Those who have been healed or had their problems resolved tell their stories to the group. In relating their stories they give full credit for their better condition to the power of water. The testimonies follow a certain format, which starts with a word of thanks to *ingelosi kababa*

Masango (Baba Masango's angel) for having brought them *mama* (Mrs Melusi) to give them water. The power in water is acknowledged. The next step is to give an account of the nature of the problem that one had. They all mentioned how after a few times of drinking from holy water and the laying on of hands, their problems started to get better. Such stories are a source of encouragement for new members, who might be anxious and doubtful about the ability of the healer to help them. At the same time, they remind older members of their experiences and encourage them not to let go of the church.

Constant reference is made to the fact that Baba Masango experienced the power of water while he was weak, that is, when he was very ill. Mme Christina gave him water to drink and washed him before he could become a powerful leader and prophet. This is meant to educate all that the power of water works for all types of people. For those who are reluctant to participate in the healing rituals, it serves as an encouragement. It comes out as saying that this is the only way to getting well, and the only way to regaining good health. This is the way of the prophets.

There are no church organisations like the women's Manyano or Amadodana. Mrs Melusi attempted to start a women's group but it failed to materialise because the majority of women were busy during

the week and they could not meet on Saturday because it is a day of healing.

3.3.1. Healing Techniques

3.3.1.1. Bath

According to Chidester (1992:141) in Zionist practice water plays a crucial role in the expulsion of evil and illness. At St John's the practice of vomiting, bathing, and enema are part of the broad rituals of expulsion and water is at the centre of all of them. The aim of all these practices is, in Chidester's words, "addressed at restoring an individual's purity and health". The individual would then be in harmony with himself or herself, as well as with the rest of the community and the environment.

The aim of the bath is to remove *isinyama* (the dark cloud that envelopes the person and attracts bad luck and attacks by witches).

Mr Mbomvu explained that,

Isinyama makes you dark and unattractive, girls will reject you, people will dislike you for no reason whatsoever, the worst thing is that, even amateur witches (*izimfunda makhwela zabathakathi*) will try their luck with you because you are an easy target (*ngoba ulula*). They will test the effectiveness of their magic with you. Everything you try might end up failing because people will be very reluctant to support you. (Interview 19)

Isinyama is always mentioned as the cause of a person's inability to get a job or for having lost one. It might also lead to disruptions in family relations and accidents. It is crucial, therefore, that *isinyama* be removed from a person. *Isinyama* does not just happen but it is brought about by witches and sorcerers.

According to Setiloane (1986a:13) "physically perceived the human person is like a live electric wire which is ever exuding force or energy in all direction". The force or energy interacts with others from other people in a state of equilibrium. What the witches do is to interfere with the make-up of the essence of a person in order to create a state of disequilibrium. The force or energy of the person concerned will send out signals which are not accepted by those she or he meets. This would be the beginning of misfortune and bad luck. The important point to remember here is that witches place their disruptive elements inside the human body, i.e., at the centre of the generation of energy. For this problem the bath will be one of many treatments that the person will need to go through. The bath only deals with the manifestation of the problem as it cleanses the outside. The holy water will deal with the source of the problem eventually, through either the enema or vomiting. Once the source has been taken out the energy returns to its natural state and the equilibrium is reached again.

The prophet will determine how many times each individual should have a bath, which is administered at the church premises. Mrs Melusi said that as someone gets a bath it becomes easy for the healer to identify other problems that this person has. This implies that there are layers of *isinyama* that need to be removed.

The prophet and his or her assistants prepare warm water mixed with charms, which can be bought from African traditional pharmacies and supermarkets. The client is supposed to bring an unused bar of sunlight soap but if they do not they can buy it from the church. Candles, vaseline and sunlight soap are stocked in large quantities at the church so as to help those who need them but cannot go to a shop.

The assistant would get water in a basin, call the client into the room, explain the whole procedure, light the candle, and then ask the client to get into the basin facing a particular direction. He or she would then start praying while the client is having a bath. The prayer is usually about the removal of a person's burdens and lifting of the dark cloud around them. After having a bath the client would then have to go and dispose the dirty water with all his or her problems, in a toilet which is located outside. While disposing water the client is instructed to tell all the bad things following him or her not to follow him or her any more and to go back to where they came from. By giving one's back to the forces of evil one is making a statement that

he or she does not want them any more. If the client turns and shows his or her face to them they will assume that he or she is inviting them back. Healers stress this fact to their clients. The client pays a fee for the bath, which he gives to the assistant. This is meant to cover the cost of warming water and the charms that are put in that water.

There are other baths that are perfumed for different situations. Mrs Melusi said that,

When you have a major function like *mokiti oa kgomo* (ceremony where a cow is slaughtered), a person has a bath with *umswane* (contents of the animal's stomach) mixed with the blood of the animal. This is useful because it appeases spiritual forces and it leads to spiritual growth and development of your healing powers. (Interview 1)

The individual in question would have a cow slaughtered in church. It is a way of giving thanks to God for having healed him or her, or for the gift of healing. Using the blood and contents of the cow's stomach when having this bath cleanses one's spiritual path. Those who help the one who has a bath keep on praying and asking that God, through the prophets, must give him or her an increment in his or her spiritual gifts. Such an increment is good for the community of faith because if one of them receives an increment it means he or she would be able to do more for them. As a thanksgiving sacrifice all members of the group and other St John's groups participate in a collective prayer for the individual in question to grow in strength, something that will be good for the growth of their denomination.

3.3.1.2. Vomiting

The aim of this procedure is to remove poisonous substances from the body (*amadliso*). *Idliso* gets into someone's body orally. Mr Mbomvu (a traditional healer) claimed that witches have the ability of giving *amadliso* to people while they sleep.

You would find yourself dreaming as if you are having a meal or a drink and at that point the witch inserts this poison in your mouth and you eat it. They give you this thing in a powder form but once inside your body it turns into what the witch wanted it to be. It will then do what it is there to do to make you ill or kill you. (Interview 19)

It is, therefore, important for these substances to be taken out of the body. In cases of those with well-established *amadliso* the healer will advise that the client should not vomit immediately but to drink holy water for sometime. Mrs Nkawu had this to say:

In case of severe *idliso* we ask the person to boil a cup of holy water and drink it every morning until a certain day. When you drink water *idliso* is softened and part of it gets out as you go to the toilet. When the person eventually vomits we are able to get out the big part of *idliso* and they would have to come back to vomit here again. We do not want them to do it on their own because they would not know what to do when this thing wants to kill them. (Interview 5)

The client is given a lot of lukewarm water to drink until they feel that they cannot take anymore, and then they would put a hand in the mouth and water together with a lot of mucous would come out. Impurities would also come out. The client is not supposed to eat

anything before the procedure. After getting most of the water out the client would dispose of it in the same way as that of the bath.

3.3.1.3. Enema

Some of the substance gets out while one is vomiting and others need an enema because they reside in the lower part of the body. The healer determines whether a person needs an enema. For serious cases it is recommended that people should have an enema in church under the supervision of the healer, in case there are complications. This procedure has been present in the African community for a long time. It was performed for most minor and major ailments among both the old and the young. Infants were given enemas to get rid of *umoya* (something which causes them to have colic). Men used to get herbs to "clean" their lower backs in order to enhance their sexual performance.

At St John's this procedure takes place in the toilet. Water is mixed with charms and then put in the enema instrument, which is a 2l jug with a pipe and a nozzle, which is inserted in the anus and then the liquid will move in. The assistant or the prophet will hold the jug high while praying. As soon as the client feels that it is enough the assistant would stop and allow him or her to have relief and then start again until they finish all the liquid.

3.3.1.4. Steaming

This procedure is aimed at removing *isichitho* and *isinyama* that had penetrated deeply into one's skin. The noun *isichitho* comes from the verb, *chitha (ukuchitha)*, meaning to spill or to destroy: *Ukuchitha amanzi/ ubisi* (To spill water/milk), *Ukuchitha umuzi* (To destroy a home). In this context the term *isichitho* means that the future of this individual has been destroyed, what ever they try to do they will never succeed. Because this is a magic spell it manifests itself in the appearance of the person. This causes one to have misfortunes, some not getting jobs, some not getting on well with their employers, young men getting rejected by women all the time. These evil substances would sometimes manifest themselves in bad skin and pimples making a person unattractive. This procedure will improve one's image in other people's eyes.

For this procedure, water has to boil and then be put in a basin and the client would then be covered with a big blanket for some time (about half an hour) and will come out sweating. Makhubu (1988:82) says that, "steam trapped under the blanket, acting as a sauna. All the grease and dirt is removed by the steam". Water will be disposed the same way as bath water.

3.3.1.5. Ukutshiza (Sprinkling)

Ukutshiza is an evacuation of evil forces from the environment. While the other rituals like bathing, vomiting, enema and steaming deal with

the physical body, this one rehabilitates the environment. The environment needs to be rehabilitated after having been occupied by evil spirits and spells sent by the witches and other anti-social agents. Sometimes an individual can be cleansed but by returning to a contaminated environment the illness 'returns'. *Isitshizo* removes all evil forces and unseen creatures so that they do not attack the occupants of the premises. When this ritual is done all the rooms and the yard are sprinkled with a holy concoction specially made for this function. The main ingredient is holy water, and the others are methylated spirit, salt and sometimes ash. All the ingredients are mixed in a bucket and then sprinkled around the premises with a small traditional broom made of grass.

On one of my visits to St John's I witnessed the sprinkling of the premises. We were sitting in the minister's chambers, which is a female space. One of the male assistants knocked and kneeled at the door. The minister asked what he needed; he requested to be given holy water, methylated spirit, salt and other elements for the sprinkling concoction. The minister then instructed the female assistant who was in the chambers to give the elements to the male assistant. He went away for a while. After having mixed and prayed over the elements he then sprinkled it throughout the premises.

Ordinarily males are not to enter the female space but when he came with *isitshizo*, saying a prayer repeatedly, he did not either knock or

ask for a permission to enter the chambers. He entered, continued sprinkling while saying his prayer, and after finishing he went on to other parts of the compound. This is done to expel all evil spirits and other unseen creatures that might cause people in the compound some harm, as well as to prevent any others from coming within the premises. The sprinkling was done first before the 7pm, when service and people were expected to come, in order to make sure that if there are people who come with unfriendly spirits, they would stay out of the compound. After having finished the sprinkling work, he took the bell and rang it to notify everyone that it was time for the evening service. At exactly 7pm we could hear him in the church starting the service.

3.4. Kinship terminology

Kinship metaphors are used at St John's to show or demonstrate family connection between the group in Gugulethu and the parents of St John's, as they are perceived, Baba and Mama Masango. They are also used to show that St John's is a big family and all are children of Baba Masango and Mama Masango. It is Baba Masango who started the great fire and it has spread to all parts of South Africa and neighbouring countries. All healers use a system that was designed by the "double engine", as Masango was known. They have to follow all the steps as laid down, or their healing methods would not be efficacious.

The term *bantwana bomoya* (children of the spirit) is used by healers to refer to people they have helped through their spiritual journey. It does not refer to one's age. One's spiritual children can be older than him or her but they still give the necessary respect. As children in spirit they need their parents to raise and guide them. That is why anyone who has a gift of healing needs a mentor and guide. They are taken through all the stages of becoming a healer. The spiritual parent (*umzali womoya*) would give the child all the necessary food to grow. This means that all the information about divining and healing techniques, information about the church tradition, as well as advice about how to run their own place once released. Spiritual children stay with their spiritual parents until they are mature enough to stand on their own. Mrs Melusi said that most people start by building a shack on their yard and use that as a church and a centre for healing. As their congregation grows they can get a bigger place. The release of the child does not mean the cutting of ties between the two—the child is free to seek help from the parents and vice versa.

Mrs Melusi is referred to as the mother of the congregation. When people talk about her they only say *umama* (mother). She came from Johannesburg and founded this congregation and has seen it grow. She has spiritual oversight over the congregation. Everyone in the congregation is her spiritual child. She refers to herself as *ihlumela laba profeti* (the outgrowth of the prophets), meaning that she received

the practice, the laws, and the traditions of St John's from the source, the prophet Masango. She claims to see them in visions when things are not going well in her life; they are a source of constant encouragement in times of crises.

As in most Zionist Churches, when someone stands up to address the congregation he or she says *ukuthula kubazalwane* or *ukuthula ebandleni* ("Peace among brothers and sisters" or "Peace in the congregation"). The same metaphor of peace is used when *abazalwane* meet. This time they say *khotsong* (SeSotho word for "peace") and the one greeted responds the same way. Peace is a very important virtue which all people desire to have.

In the use of kinship terms at St John's it becomes very clear that although the church responds to crisis in people's lives, once inside, one sees signs of a growth and development model. These terms point to giving birth, rearing, feeding and generally nurturing, all of which indicate growth and development.

3.5. Material Support

The church structure was designed to meet the needs of those who are physically and emotionally not well. The basic material support is through its healing rituals in its bid to restore them to good health. A

new member joins a support network, which is constantly encouraging and supporting in times of need.

Mrs Melusi pointed out that she was not employed, and had no source of income. She lived on gifts from the congregation and those who were healed but are not members of the congregation. Such people come back to show their appreciation of what she has done for them by giving her either gifts of money or other things that she might need. She has a philosophy that God will always provide for her needs and those of her children, a philosophy that she inherited from Baba Masango. In his biography, Mhlongo pointed out that Baba Masango received gifts of money from many thankful clients for his building projects. Mrs Melusi spoke about an individual who offered her money to extend and renovate her compound. In a lot of our conversations she was always thankful to God for sending her the right people. The sanctuary was renovated and more rooms were built to accommodate the sick. There are other individuals who have taken it upon themselves to buy clothes for her children and help her with school fees. In case a of someone needy, the congregation finds ways of meeting that need.

4. Conclusion

What was described above illustrates ways of managing change or the conversion experience. The convert is groomed to be part of the group.

All these activities are aimed at developing a sense of group identity and to make him or her feel a sense of belonging to the group. Water is used for both healing and purification; at all services members are given water to drink for purification, while individual members are given water to take to their homes as a medicament. They could use it to drink, bath, as well as to chase evil spirits by sprinkling it around the house. Healing takes place within the African traditional view of the world where there is a presence of two opposing forces, that is, good and evil. The healer is a representative of the good. For healing they use rituals of expulsion. The philosophy is that the evil force or power has unjustly occupied the body or the environment of the person concerned. The duty of the healer is to use different medicaments to expel these forces. For the human body the enema, vomiting, the bath and steam are used. Sprinkling holy water in the home removes evil spirits.

The aim is to restore harmony and goodwill through following a prescribed moral and ethical code. The evil, on the other hand, is there to dissuade people from the proper morality. Evil forces do whatever it takes to destroy any goodness which humans try to establish. Prophets, ministers, and the whole establishment at St John's have the task of engaging with these forces in battle. The most important factor is that they draw on both African traditional and Christian/ biblical resources in their fight against evil.

The healing process shows how the church intervenes in a crisis situation and resolves the crisis for the individual. For some individuals, the crisis directs them to the church. They must sign up and be members. While for some it could be resolved and they return to their previous place of worship. This chapter looks at various ways in which the church manages the crisis as well as the process of change for the individual. The first port of call is when the individual meets the healer/leader/prophet and the diagnosis is made, secondly, would be invitation to healing sessions; and thirdly, would be invitation to church services.

From here onward the individual has to make a decision about joining or not joining. In the case of the one who joins, a public declaration has to be made (of one's commitment to joining). He or she is then baptised (inclusion into the family). The style of crisis management applies throughout a person's life in the church. Once the ritual crisis has been resolved, one is always on crisis alert, anticipating any form of crisis. *Isiwasho*, the use of holy water in the home, drinking of water in all services, and the sprinkling of the premises with holy concoctions are all part of the strategy to manage crisis situations. Healing plays a very pivotal role in keeping all members in a state of crisis-alert.

In the process of going through all these activities, a new recruit's worldview is completely reorganised; he or she begins to see the world

in terms of the ideology of St John's. Their entire frame of reference is altered to that of St John's. St John's mobilises resources to help members to become human in a dehumanising socio-economic and political context. Church membership gives them a sense of being human. There is mutual recognition of each other's humanity. The different rituals are performed to help foster the process of self-definition and identification as a worthy human being.

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CHAPTER 4

THE GROWTH MODEL FOR MANAGING CHANGE

1. Introduction

The growth model refers to a process gradual socialisation. Growth means attachment and development, both intellectually and experientially. People mature in terms of age and at the same time they accumulate experience and knowledge. Ideally, growth would be accumulative; the same principle as in the school system would apply. In order to understand this model, one can use the analogy of the development of a child. The mother starts her with milk, then soft food, and eventually ordinary food. The reason why she was not given porridge or rice at two weeks is that she was not ready for it. Her body was not mature enough to digest it. In this model, children are gradually introduced into the faith, starting with less complex material and gradually moving to more complex. Based on the idea that *umuthi ugotshwa usemanzi* (a tree is only shaped when still young) young people must be introduced to the values, vision, and mission of the church at a very early age, so that they would become second nature to them. Thus elders use metaphors like "I mix the gospel into my children's porridge". In other words, the gospel is part of their children's daily food. The gospel is supposed to flow in their veins. All this suggests that religious teaching and the values

promoted by the church become part of their primary socialisation. They learn to see and interpret the world around them in terms of established religious models.

Children have to internalise these values in order to act upon them. As they grow older more pieces are added to the puzzle. The focus of this model is the future. The major driving force is the deferral of rewards to the world beyond. There is a strong belief that the church has both current and future relevance. By bringing in young people, the church ensures its future sustainability. There are various strategies employed to keep them within the arena of the church's influence. Firstly, infant baptism is a way of claiming children for God. As the sign of belonging, baptism is a mark put on a child's forehead identifying him or her as a member of the family. At baptism parents or guardians give an undertaking that they will bring their children up in accordance with the values, vision and mission of the church. Baptism is the beginning of the socialisation process. Secondly, at Sunday school children are introduced to other children who belong to the same denomination. They are encouraged to make friends; most friendships tend to last beyond Sunday school. Children are taught the basics of the Christian faith, but more importantly they are encouraged to identify with their denomination. Thirdly, confirmation is an important milestone in the development of an individual. It is when one is conferred with full membership of the church. It is a stage at which one is expected to be knowledgeable enough to help

others learn something about their faith. It is when one graduates from being an associate member to a member in full-communion.

At this stage individuals are deemed responsible because they have the knowledge of the truth. If one were to falter, the church leadership would be justified in handing down appropriate punishment. At this point one can clearly distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil. Before confirmation individuals are supposed to study the major pillars of the faith and satisfy leaders that they have understood the basics. They would then be entitled to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist. Finally, church organisations are regarded as vital for one's growth spiritually and organisationally. At this level of growth one can then challenge for leadership positions.

As we have seen, conversion in the AIC is brought about by a dramatic crisis in one's life. Sometimes people have dreams and visions of being at St John's. By contrast, conversion at the RPCSA is not so dramatic. For most people it is their family church or they marry into it. There are a few who have experienced problems in other mainline churches like Miss Akulalwa who came from the Methodist Church. She only says that she had a problem with one of the leaders and then decided to leave and join the RPCSA. Others have disciplinary problems in their churches and then decide to leave and join another church. It could be that one was excommunicated for a certain offence and is not satisfied with the decision.

Most people in RPCSA regard it as their "family" church (*icawe yasekhaya*) or due to marriage (*icawe yasemzinami*). It is a source of pride for many members to be born Presbyterians. They go as far as saying that they "suckled" (*ndayi ncanca*) Presbyterianism from their parents. Some people like Mr Moses pointed out that his family has been part of the church for generations. He is a third generation member because his grandfather and his father were very active in the church. The act of suckling implies that one gets something from its source. What one gets is therefore authentic. In other words, their parents who were very good Presbyterians handed down this faith to them. As heirs to "the soul of the church", they feel that they have to defend the interests of the church all the time. They will carefully scrutinise the actions of new members, especially those from other denominations, so that they do not bring alien practices into their domain.

Growing up in the church means being baptised there, attending Sunday School, graduating into the Youth Fellowship, and then joining the adult organisations (Women's Manyano, the Young Men's Christian Guild), and possibly getting into the leadership as a deacon or an elder. This means that you have Presbyterianism running in your veins and blood stream. It is part of who you are. Church membership offers you tools with which to define yourself.

Ordinary people are generally not concerned about the fundamentals of Presbyterianism. A question was put to a group of youngsters about the difference between their church and the Methodist Church down the road. The answer to this question was that they did not know about the basic differences except they use different uniforms. What is important in this regard is the heritage. People trace their family membership of the church generations back, which then authenticates their membership and even their entitlement to hold certain positions. If the father or grandfather was an elder in the church, some people feel that they too are entitled to become elders. They are supposed to take over from where their departed parents left off. Such sentiments recall the practice of hereditary leadership in African traditional contexts.

In community functions like funerals, an elder or preacher is expected to help or be part of the group that officiates. She or he is supposed to put on a preacher's robe (*umthika*) and join other preachers and the minister in leading the funeral service. In some cases they are the ones who carry the coffin into and out of the church. Their other privilege is to put in sand into the grave with the minister and then the rest of the congregation can follow. Church membership goes much further than a simple religious faith for it also has social implications, as in the case mentioned above. Setiloane (1986b:89) observed that religious affiliation and positions of authority which people have has the ability to raise their profile in the community.

During the week some people work as domestic helpers and do other menial jobs yet in church they are figures of authority. He pointed out that "I have lived with men suffering the stigma of 'John', 'Piet', or 'Joseph' the whole day as a 'tea boy', 'messenger boy' or downright unskilled labourer yet rising up to the respectability and worth of 'Mr Society Steward'".

In a revival service at the RPCSA, people stood up and said that they were converting under the scripture read that day. Most of those who stood up to convert are confirmed members of the congregation and some are even in the leadership. This act implies that for them conversion is an on-going process rather than something that happens once. One has to convert all the time. People's constant conversion is premised on the fact that the Word of God is a new revelation all the time. Their position in the eyes of God is constantly tested and reviewed through different interpretations of scripture. This makes people realise that they are not perfect but incomplete persons who need renewal all the time. People are puzzled when you ask them when they were converted. To them it is very strange to be asked such a question because they keep on converting all the time.

In cases of those who for some reason left the church after baptism and Sunday School, and confess their sin and ask to return to the church, they will cite that moment when they decided to come back as their moment of conversion. In their testimonies, they relate their

journey into the world of sin and what God did to take them out. That moment would be seen and understood as conversion.

There are those who for some reason left the church and joined another church. On their return, they give accounts of where they were and what prompted them to come back. That which prompted their return will be hailed as a very important event, a turning point in their lives. This for them would be regarded as their moment of conversion. It is a moment where God intervened in a bad situation and then pointed them in the right direction. The account of what was wrong in the other church is often explained in coded language. The majority of narratives allude to "not fitting in" or simply not feeling a sense of belonging. The return to the original church is perceived as coming home. Therefore, coded language as discourse is not all about the sinful world, but also about other churches in conversion narratives.

What clearly transpires from the above discussion is that even though the majority of members at RPCSA are born-members, there is often a point of crisis in their lives, which they would regard as their moment of conversion. One also has to realise that getting people to recognise that moment in their lives does not come easily because the dominant view is that you were born in the church. At the same time, in revival services people say they convert under the Word, which does not mean that they admit to any wrong-doing or sin. This might be

interpreted to mean that they have learnt something from the way the preacher did his exegesis of the scripture that day.

There is also a sense that it is important for a female adult to belong to a church. Because of the role of the mother in the home it becomes important for her to belong to a church so that when disaster strikes she would have support. For example, in times of death in the home, the mother is the chief mourner. In the absence of traditional support structures in the urban areas, church members become very useful. A person can always rely on the support of fellow church members. For a mother, what example is she giving her children when she does not attend church? In church she will be given a moral grounding that she will be able to impart to her children. She is also encouraged to send her children to the Sunday school where they are introduced to the Christian faith and the church in general. These children will then grow and develop within the church. It is important to groom them as early as one can for church leadership.

The seating arrangement in church is gender specific except for the youth and children. Such an arrangement is in line with traditional seating patterns in an African traditional hut. Men sit on the right hand side, while women sit on the left. Children grow up together in the homestead playing and enjoying each other's company. When they get to puberty they will be consciously separated, with boys joining their elder brothers in looking after the livestock, while girls join their

elder sisters and their mothers in performing domestic duties, such as cooking, cleaning, or fetching water. At this stage boys and girls are socialised into knowing that they are different and that they have different functions. Their differences would be highlighted during their initiation. At RPCSA there are three seating rows. The middle row is the biggest one with the other two being of the same size. Men and children occupy the two smaller rows and women occupy the big one.

2. Rituals

2.1. Rituals of incorporation

In order to understand the importance of the rituals of incorporation one has to move from the premise that the church is a social construction. The church is endowed with sacredness and holiness. It has the right to dispense sacraments whose aim is to bring participants to an experience of the divine. The church is also the guardian of divine truth, knowledge, mysteries, and wisdom. These attributes of the church make it "dangerous" to the uninitiated. It is, therefore, important for new members to go through the correct channels in order to avert this danger. Baum (1990:359) observed that knowledge in many African societies is seen as transformative. That is why the initiation process concentrates on the teaching and sharing of information on the mission, status, and the working of the church. Initiation teaches new members how to safely tap into the sacred power of the church through prayer and other forms of communication.

Through the experience of being among the believers, new members learn how people relate to God. There is an official version, which they learn at confirmation classes, and an unofficial version, which is experienced in services and prayer meetings. The existence of two versions can be attributed to the sources from which the church drew its resources. The confirmation classes draw teaching materials from a Western Christian background, which is more cerebral. By contrast, services and prayer meetings draw on African sources that are more expressive and performative. The following are some of the terms used when referring to the experience of God: *Bawo onamandla onke* (all powerful Father, or literally Father with all the power), *mzali* (parent), *magxa amakhulu ngokuthwala izoono zehlabathi* (the broad shouldered one who carries the sins of the world). God is perceived as all-powerful, loving and caring. There is a sense that nothing is impossible in Him.

2.1.1. Baptism

According to the *Manual of Law, Practice and Procedure in the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa*, baptism is a public event whose aim is to incorporate children into the Christian family:

The ordinance of baptism should be administered during public worship; and parents ought to bring their children to the House of God for this purpose; but the Session may, where it sees cause, authorise the administration of baptism elsewhere than in the church. ...Baptism is to be administered to adults upon their profession of faith in Christ and obedience to Him.

Baptism is to be administered also to orphans and children whose upbringing has been undertaken by members of the church, when the Session is satisfied that those desiring baptism for them are in a full position to fulfil their baptismal vows. (1958:5)

Like most other mission churches, the RPCSA practices baptism through sprinkling. Rev. Xapile, however, pointed out that there is a provision in the church statute for immersion, provided one was not baptised before. A baptismal service is organised at least twice a year. Only children of confirmed members in good standing are baptised. The parent(s) of the child would approach an elder in their area about their intentions to have the child baptised, and give him all the details. The elder then presents the names of parents who intend to have their children baptised to the Kirk Session, where they are scrutinised and then accepted. On the day of baptism children are baptised and the parents are alerted to the responsibility they had taken. By bringing children to be baptised, they made a covenant that they would instruct them in accordance with the teachings of the church. This presents a commitment that they would bring these children to the knowledge of God. Once children are 4-5 years old, they could be brought to the Sunday school. Baptism is a mark that children belong to the flock.

Following from birth, children are born into the church through baptism. It initiates the process of growth and development of a child as part of the church establishment. Parents and guardians make a

covenant to instruct their children in terms of the teachings of the church, thus linking them to previous generations of church members.

2.1.2. Confirmation

Confirmation is the acceptance of a member into full communion in the church. Prior to that one is an associate member. Confirmation thus brings the member into the inner circle, with rights, and is thus fully recognised as part of the group. Theoretically, this member can contest for leadership positions. It has to be understood that the longer one's service in the church the more respect she or he attains. In short, confirmation is a public declaration by the church that a member is now one of "us". The congregation witnesses this important moment of yet another group of people who become part of the congregation.

Two categories of people take a confirmation class, the new recruits as well as youngsters who are no longer of Sunday school-going age, whose aim is to become members in full communion. Membership in full communion is important in that one is then able to join organisations of choice in the church, get support from the church in times of crises, and take part in the Lord's Table, the Eucharist. The class goes on for a year. During the process candidates receive instruction in the fundamentals of the Christian faith, the Bible, and the constitution and structure of the church. For those who went

through Sunday School, this would be a consolidation of what was learnt, which is an addition of another layer, while for those who are new recruits, this is an opportunity to get an understanding of their new faith. Confirmation is where they are socialised into the Christian ways of what is appropriate behaviour for a Christian child, *ukuziphatha komtana waseNkonzweni*.

Candidates of the confirmation class gave a variety of reasons why they wanted to be confirmed. Firstly, the common explanation among the youth is that *ndizozigcinisa ecaweni* (I came so that I could be shepherded in the church). It sounds as if one is a refugee fleeing the world of darkness into the safe haven of the sanctuary. The church appears to be a place of safety, different from the dark and dangerous world of the township. The church is a place so charged with the sacred that her influence is life-giving and life-changing. Anyone who wants to stay alive should keep away from the negative influences prevailing in the township and join the church. The phrase "*icawe izondakha*" (the church will mould me) is used by many young people. They believe in the ability and capacity of the church to mould and develop them into responsible individuals.

Secondly, there are those who heard or experienced the good work done by the church in the community and then decide to be part of it. A young woman who did not take the church seriously saw and heard the church youth singing at a funeral at her home. Their commitment

and how well they sang impressed her. These reasons convinced her to seek confirmation.

Thirdly, there are those who say *“ndifuna ukufunda ukushumayela nokuthandaza”* (I want to learn how to preach and how to pray). Preaching and praying are important components of church practice and those people show their seriousness by wanting to know how to do these two things in order to fully participate in the work of the church and furthering her mission. Learning how to preach and pray implies learning the language of delivery. You also learn what some people call *isiRhabe* (ways of the Presbyterians).

In the teaching, a distinction is always made between “inside” (*ngaphakathi*) and “outside” (*ngaphandle*). The “inside” is the church and its moral and ethical teachings, its view of the world and how it should be ordered. It is about how to behave, and what not to do. The “outside” is said to be dangerous and has the ability to hook people. It is very difficult to survive once the outside captures you. The outside is depicted as a dangerous world of sin, murder, rape, and drugs. This world is known for its attractiveness and appeal, especially for young people. Often the adults warn about *ubunewunewu beento zangaphandle* (the pleasures of the outside world). The “outside” is painted as a beautiful and glamorous world, which can seduce people into sin. This metaphor about the “outside” is mostly used as a reference to sexual misconduct and warning people about the form

evil takes before it devours someone. Continually, a convert has to guard against the tricks of the evil one.

As part of the confirmation process a camp is organised. Distinguished Christian speakers are invited to share their experiences as a way of encouraging new members. According to the senior minister, such camps are important occasions for the leadership of the church to engage with confirmation candidates in a relaxed atmosphere. The church leadership is then able to make new members feel important in the work and life of the church.

At the end of the training process full membership is conferred on all the participants. A special service is arranged where membership is conferred. Such a service is only done once a year just before the Good Friday and Easter festivities. Only an ordained minister can preside over this service. During the service the names of all new members are read out by one of the leading elders. New members proceed to the front where the minister and a few designated elders confer membership in the form of a handshake. From the day of the service, these people are regarded as members in full communion.

During the confirmation service the church celebrates numerical expansion and individual growth, which are significant events in the life of the church. First, confirmation means that more people are added to the inner circle of the church. More people are added to the

church's arena of influence. Numerical strength is crucial for effective evangelical work and financial viability. Second, the service is celebration of individual growth, which means that the candidate had come of age. They had acquired the knowledge and maturity necessary for them to be promoted to the next stage. Such individuals are expected to make contributions to the project of the church. Third, it is the celebration of the future of the church. Through different growth stages the church ensures her future relevance and the sustainability of her projects. Candidates are exposed to different levels of knowledge that are accumulated over a number of stages. The confirmation service, therefore, marks the symbolic inclusion of new members into the community.

2.2. Rituals of Celebration

2.2.1 Sunday Service

A normal service starts with a procession of elders (including ministers) from the vestry through the main entrance to the stage where the pulpit stands. As the procession enters the main entrance, the entire congregation stands while singing as they were before. Someone carrying a large, open Bible leads the procession and at the tail is the preacher. Once the procession reaches the stage, all the elders take their seats and the preacher ascends to the pulpit. While the congregation is still standing he reaches out and takes the big

Bible, reads one verse, and then hands it back to the bearer who puts it on a stand and then takes his seat as well.

At this point there is silence in the sanctuary and the service leader, in a loud voice announces an opening hymn. All members are supposed to bring their own Bibles and hymn books. It is a common occurrence to find people sharing these texts. The congregation stands to sing the opening hymn led by *umhlabeli* (the precentor). *Umhlabeli* is someone who has a good voice, knows many tunes, and is innovative and creative. She or he has to be alert during the service so that whenever there is a minor disturbance an appropriate piece of music can be introduced. She or he must be able to read the mood of the service and the theme of the sermon so as to introduce appropriate choruses. In this church, as in many other Black churches, there are no musical instruments. However, people have come up with innovations; there is a pillow-like leather bag stuffed with wool, with a handling strap called *umpampam*, which sounds like a drum; a horn (made of old plumbing pipes); and a bell (two pieces of metal that are hit against each other to make a sound). All these instruments are beaten to the rhythm of the song to make a vibrant sound. All the verses of the opening hymn are sung and then the last verse is repeated a number of times before *umhlabeli* signals that it must be ended.

Music is the cornerstone of African worship. As Mbiti observed,

God is often worshipped through song, and African peoples are very fond of singing. Many religious gatherings and ceremonies are accompanied by singing which not only helps to pass on religious knowledge from one person or group to another, but helps create and strengthen corporate feeling and solidarity. (Mbiti, 1969: 67)

At the end of the opening hymn, the preacher asks someone to lead the congregation in prayer, which is followed immediately by the Lord's Prayer (Our Father). The first of the two scripture readings will be taken, usually from the Old Testament. The two readings have to have some connection. A hymn is sung before the second reading from the New Testament. After the second reading it is time for notices to be announced by one of the leading elders. Notices range from church activities to deaths. A moment of silence is observed in honour of those who died during the previous week. At the end of the moment of silence an appropriate song or chorus is sung. During this time visitors and new members are welcomed and asked to identify themselves. The deacons take the offerings and bring them to the altar for blessing. The preacher can bless the collection, but sometimes he would ask a minister or one of the elders to do it.

The service continues after the collection with a hymn, *elitshayeleva intshumayelo*, which precedes the sermon or introduces the sermon. This hymn opens the way for God to speak to the people. The term *intshayeleva* comes from the word *ukutshayela*, to sweep. The hymn before the sermon is meant to sweep away all the "dirt" and obstacles

from people's hearts and minds, in order to be receptive to the sermon. The sermon is taken seriously to mean *ukwabiwa kweLizwi likaThixo* (sharing of the Word of God) or *ukuphakwa kwelizwi* (the dishing out of the word). It means that people have to prepare themselves to receive what God has in store for them. For the preacher, this hymn is a launching pad for his missiles. It paves the way for the reception and at the same time it prepares him to deliver the message appropriately. The preacher has to be *emoyeni/kumoya* (in the spirit) when delivering the message for it to have any impact on the congregation. This is a time when the whole congregation receives teaching on a Christian principle or an aspect of Christianity. The sermon is delivered with energy and enthusiasm.

A prayer follows the sermon. During the sermon, a preacher will often speak of something which troubles people, for example, children who disobey or abuse their parents, children who abuse drugs, people who are jealous, and so on. Some of these people, especially women, cry during the sermon and prayer time is the time to commit their problems to God. There is no set rule of doing this; some would ask one person to pray, while others prefer to have the whole congregation pray.

The prayer is followed by a closing hymn; afterwhich there is benediction. The Bible bearer takes the Bible from the stand and hands it to the preacher who closes it and says *oneendlebe makeve*

akutshoyo umoya emabandleni (He, who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches) (Rev. 2:29). The procession leaves the sanctuary with the preacher following immediately after the Bible bearer. The big Bible leaves the sanctuary closed. The rest of the congregation remains standing until the procession has left the sanctuary and then they disperse.

For the elders, ministers, and the preacher, the service starts and ends in the vestry where prayers are said. Before they move into the sanctuary, elders discuss important notices and other issues that need to be brought to the attention of the congregation. The formation of the procession, with the Bible in front, is an act of sacralising the sanctuary, making the presence of the Word of God visible. The leaders of the church are the custodians of the Word in the community. They come across as people who are serious. This procedure is followed every Sunday.

2.2.2 Good Friday and Easter

Good Friday and Easter mark the major festival in the life of the church. The festival starts on a Thursday evening with a night vigil. During the night vigil congregants trace all of Jesus' activities, Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus, his trials, Pilate finding no fault in him, Pilate washing his hands, and his eventual condemnation to die on the cross. This service ends in the early hours of the morning. People then go home to get ready for the main service later that day.

The main service is called *indlela yomnqamlezo* (the way of the cross). Seven different preachers present the seven utterances by Jesus on the cross. The service starts with the minister delivering an introductory message, which opens the way for the preachers. He gives a context for what the preachers would be saying later. After the minister's message each of the seven preachers stands up to give an explanation of the word they are responsible for. They give interesting interpretations that involve contemporary application. Mbiti (1979:87) noted that African preachers situate Biblical texts within the experienced reality of their congregations:

Horst Buerkle has made important observations: that for the African preacher, "the persons and the events of both Testaments are always near to the preacher and his congregation, as if they were part of their own time"; that "attempt to reproduce biblical history through illustrations drawn from local African scenes is a common practice"; and that "the African preacher confronts us with the relevance of the symbol".

Before making a presentation, each preacher requests that his favourite hymn is sung, to help him into the spirit. The majority of people believe in being inspired by the spirit and so the singing can go on for some time. In fact,

Music, singing and dancing reach deep into the innermost parts of African peoples, and many things come to the surface under musical inspiration which otherwise may not be readily revealed. (Mbiti, 1969:67)

After the hymn, the preacher would then introduce the utterance that he would be talking about and then gives an explanation. As the preacher delivers his message there is support from those in the congregation in the form of shouts of AMEN! EWE! (Yes), or KUNJALO! (It is true). Such interjection is observable in the performance of African oral poetry. According to Opland,

Amongst the Zulu the audience may compliment the performance by interjecting encouraging shouts like "*Musho*"! At the end of each rhythmic utterance of the imbongi, but this encouragement is not necessary to the performance in the way that the involvement of others apart from the lead singer is necessary to certain choral songs. (1980:296)

After all the preachers had made their presentations, an altar call is made by *ugqogqa*. The person who does this job would have been designated before the service by the elders in the vestry. The altar call takes its own direction depending on the skills of *ugqogqa*. He stands up to call on all those who are *ngaphandle kofefe lukaThixo* (outside of the grace of God) to make a commitment to join the church. He would go on to ask people to join church organisations, e.g., *amadodana*. There is a lot of singing giving the undecided people a chance to make their decision and be part of the church community. All these people are supposed to go and stand in front of the altar as a public pronouncement that on this day they made a decision to join the church. It is appropriate to recruit during this service because many people attend; even those who do not attend church regularly. It has

been observed over a ten-year period that among Africans Good Friday and Easter festival is taken much more seriously than Christmas. Churches are always packed to capacity, with people standing outside. *Ugqogqa* makes a signal that the singing should stop and then hands over to the minister who leads the congregation to prayer. The whole congregation prays and the new members are advised what to do. The service is then closed.

Easter Sunday is a joyous day because people celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. The spirit of *uvukile* (he has risen) pervades the whole church. The message delivered by the minister centres around the meaning and significance of resurrection. The singing is still as inspired as it was on Friday, although the tense atmosphere is gone. The service ends like a normal service.

2.2.3. A House-opening Ritual

It is a fact that Africans in mainline churches have appropriated the church and its practices as their own. However, there are certain African practices that still remain outside the church discourse. The issue of ancestors and their veneration does not feature in formal or public church discourse. However, individual members in their homes perform rituals honouring their deceased relatives. Such a practice demonstrates that there is continuity and discontinuity between the church and the home. Although the home is supposed to serve as one of the primary socialising agents for the church there are matters

where the two do not communicate. The most important point, however, is that individual members do not see any problem with the current arrangement. They do not see any contradiction between what they do for their ancestors in their homes and their Christian faith.

It is common practice for Africans in urban areas, when moving into a new property, to have a house-opening ritual. Through this ritual family ancestors are introduced to the new premises and then asked to protect the home and its occupants. These rituals differ from family to family. Some slaughter a number of beasts for a feast with beer drinking, while others only have the beer drinking and cooked samp.

On 16 December 1999, a house-opening ritual was held at Mr Ziqubu's place. Mr Ziqubu is an elder at RPCSA. The slaughtering was done on Friday evening and a lot of food was prepared. People came in large numbers. At the back yard a sacred space was created for the purpose of the ritual. Chairs were arranged in a circle. At the head of the circle sat the ritual leader, and people sat from there according to their seniority. Seniority is determined in terms of age and when a person was circumcised. All the men respected and followed the instructions of the ritual leader.

When the time arrived for the ceremony to start, the ritual leader stood up and addressed the congregation. He asked people to take off their hats because they were going to pray. He then started to pray,

asking God to bless the ceremony and the family. At the end of the prayer, he gave an explanation for the gathering. He pointed at Mr Ziqubu and said, "This man has invited all of us to share in this feast where he introduces his fore-fathers to his home. He asks for their protection and guidance. As we all sit here we are now members of his clan. Let us then eat and celebrate". After this speech, the ritual leader directed a speech to the ancestors and said, *MaNcamane amahle naba abantwana benu bathi bafuna nazi apho bekhona nibakhusele nibaphe neentsikelelo*. MaNcamane (clan name) here are your children, they say they want you to know where they are residing. They are asking for your protection and blessings.

Mr Ziqubu was called to initiate the beer drinking. There were two types of beverages, the traditional brew (*umqombothi*) and bottled alcohol (brandy and beer). There were two beakers and two bottles of brandy, one for the older men and one for the younger men. Everyone was expected to have a sip of both drinks because it is an ancestral ritual. As a result, all take part. Next to me sat a man who belonged to St John's. In our conversation I told him that I do not take alcohol. He said in his church they do not allow people to drink but we were in a solemn function where we all had to participate, so even a taste would be enough. In subsequent rounds, it became possible to pass the beaker without tasting. Since this occasion is an ancestral ritual, some of the teachings of the church on alcohol consumption are

ignored because it is not a social drink but communion with the ancestors.

Later on plates of food were circulated. People enjoyed the good food and drinks. While people sat and talked, new people joined us and the ritual leader stood to explain again the reason for the gathering. Occasionally, he appointed someone else to speak. Individuals who stood up to address the congregation removed their hats and put on jackets or covered their shoulders as a sign of respect for the ancestors. This type of behaviour is common in church.

Women were in a separate place where they were enjoying their brew and food. No woman was supposed to come near the sacred space, and no man was supposed to be where women were. As time went on people started leaving.

This house-opening ritual suggests a certain discontinuity between what happens in church and what takes place in a home. Mr Ziqubu draws on both the African tradition and culture and Christianity. People who were part of the ritual, some members of the denominations, did not see anything wrong with the performance of the ritual. For Mr Ziqubu there was no contradiction between the blood of Christ and that of the beast. His ancestors had to know exactly where he is, and there was an attempt to re-enact a traditional village scene by sacralising the back yard. Following the advice of

senior clansmen was significant in making the ritual a success. The driving force behind the ritual was to get protection from the ancestors. He believed ancestors would protect him against misfortune and illness. With the presence of the ancestors in the home, one could also gain material wealth, since opportunities would open up for one to be able to make money.

3. Tradition

3.1. Ecclessiology

The church stands for moral purity, goodness, charity, good neighbourliness, and other noble values. These values are premised on the teachings of the Bible and the founders of the church. Because of the stand taken by the church, the community has certain expectations of the members of the church. Members are expected to uphold the values of the church and set an example in the community. The church teaches its members what is expected of them through various platforms, including sermons, confirmation classes, the Sunday school, and church organisations. If an individual breaches the code of behaviour and acts in a manner that causes embarrassment to the church, disciplinary action can be taken against that member.

The Kirk Sèssion, which is composed of the minister(s) and the elders, is the highest decision-making body in the church and the guardian of

the image of the church. They are the protectors of the collective *seriti/isidima* of the church, the image and reputation of the church. An elder is a lay person who is elected by the congregation and is inducted by the session through the imposition of hands. This appointment is made for life. An elder can only be removed or excused from office if he has committed an act that is in contrast to the teachings of the church or he has compelling personal reasons to step down. The Kirk Session is responsible for setting up policy for the congregation and nothing should happen without their endorsement.

The minister is someone who has responded to the call to the ministry and has gone through theological training. He is the pastor of the congregation, looking after their spiritual welfare. He is the shepherd looking after the flock. He is supposed to provide strong leadership to the Kirk Session and the congregation. He simplifies the codes of behaviour and trains the leaders. He also oversees the maintenance and improvement of the church property. The current minister, Rev. Xapile, has created a sense of unity of purpose since joining the congregation in 1989. He has brought in a lot of changes. He started by dividing the congregation into zones, with an elder as the leader.

The purpose of the zones was to encourage fellowship where people live. Zones have their meetings during the week, where they encourage each other. Another purpose of the zones was to involve all members in the work of the church, based on the Reformed

Tradition's principle of the "priesthood of all believers". Because of the geographical nature of the zones members are expected to be effective in their areas and recruit new members through their actions, more than through their words and promises. In case of a member having a crisis at home, the first person to report to is the zone elder. If the elder cannot handle the crisis he would immediately go to the minister. Elders are pastors in their zones, and ministers have to have their co-operation for their ministry to be a success. Zones are also vital when it comes to the fundraising effort.

The elder in the zone makes sure that members uphold the good image of the church. He teaches and advises. Any case of breach of the rules by one of the members is reported to him, who in turn takes the matter to the Kirk Session where an investigation would be conducted. The member concerned would be given an opportunity to make a representation before the ruling is made on the matter. If a member were found to have done something wrong she or he would be handed due punishment. There are instances where members are excommunicated (*basikwe*, which literally means being cut-off). This is a strong statement by the church, distancing herself from the wrongdoing of one of her members. The church takes firm action to protect its *isidima* (dignity). The message sent to the community is that the church does not tolerate actions that lead people into sin and destruction. This action is not only taken to protect the church, but also more for the individual concerned. By taking quick and decisive

action, the church helps to rehabilitate this individual. She or he would not be banished from the church, but would be stripped of his or her full membership, which extends to the membership of church organisations; and neither can he or she participate in the Lord's table (*umthendeleko*). The member then returns to being an associate member. For him or her to regain membership, he or she has to prove to the leadership that he or she recognises the mistake made and is willing to correct that. The term used for someone who has breached the code is *uwile* (she or he has fallen).

The church clearly distinguishes itself from the unchristian community. The most prominent feature of the church community is the fellowship of the believers (*ubunkonzo*). It draws all of them to a common vision, purpose and destiny. They all see themselves as warriors in the war against evil. The world of the church is the world of goodness and is at loggerheads with that of evil and malice (outside).

Abantwana basenkonzweni (children of the church) are cultured and well behaved. They can clearly distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil. They are brought up to internalise all the values that the church stands for. They are the "light of the world" (Matt. 5: 14), the salvation of the world is their prime mission. They are supposed to lead exemplary lives, as their actions should not betray the collective image of the church. *Abantwana bangaphandle* (children from

outside) are said to be uncouth, uncultured and badly socialised or oriented. Their actions are an antithesis of the work of the church. The church must work very hard to bring them into the fold and resocialise them. Thus, the appeal by Rev Xapile that “we must put in place a strong moral infrastructure in this community”.

The moral infrastructure would be premised on the teachings of the church and the Bible. The church is supposed to extend its authority beyond its gates to the rest of the community. Such action is based on the belief that the central mission of the church is the salvation of the world. Before the local community self-destructs through crime, drugs, prostitution and lack of knowledge, the church must step in and be the light.

In the mindset of the church, there is a strong belief that eventually evil will be defeated. No one believes that it will be easy. Evil comes in the most beautiful guise. Beware of “the wolves in sheepskin” (*Lumkelani iingcuka ezembethe ifele legusha*), is the warning by those entrusted with the responsibility to teach. They warn that evil is sly and seductive and once one is seduced it is difficult to escape. The example often used is that of drug dealers who have flashy cars, clothes, and money- they are often popular because of what they can offer their “friends” materially. The church deplores such unlawful and immoral ways of acquiring money. Values of hard work and honesty are central to its teaching on this matter.

History is very important in the formation of the RPCSA identity. They take pride in the work and successes of the past and keep a memory of that. The naming of churches in memory of the past ministers bears testimony to that. The church in Langa is named after Tiyo Soga, one of the first black Presbyterian ministers. The church in Guguletu is named after Rev. JL Zwane, a minister from Natal who was brought to Cape Town in 1952 to deal with the crisis faced by the church in Cape Town. He is described as a very dignified man who did not waste time but carried out his task efficiently. Those who were part of this experience feel very privileged to have been part of that good history. It is also a source of pride for people, especially the older generation, to belong to a congregation in memory of such a man.

History is very important because it gives one a sense of who he or she is, the achievements of the past, and the road still to cover. It is an inspiration for people to work harder because they realise how much their forebears had to contend with in order to achieve a certain degree of success. History gives people a sense of who they are by looking at their heritage.

3.2. Recruitment

The bulk of members are recruited from children and relatives of members. Pauw (1975:47) pointed out that "on marriage a woman automatically transfers her membership to the church with which her husband's family is associated". Thus married women would refer to

this church as *icawe yasemzinami*. The husband does not necessarily have to be an active member of the church, but as long as the mother-in-law is involved the new wife would have to abide. The Sunday school is where future members are groomed and children are introduced to the church procedures at an early age. In addition to there being a Sunday school, there are other recruitment strategies that are employed periodically to tap new membership from the ranks of the unbelievers.

3.2.1 *Uhlaselo* (crusade)

The term *Uhlaselo* literally means "attack". The church launches an attack on the enemy territory (crusade). *Uhlaselo* gives an impression that people are involved in a war. This war is between the forces of goodness (represented by the church) against the forces of evil. The march through the streets of the township is reminiscent of the Israelite army under Joshua's command around the city of Jerico. It is a triumphalist march claiming victory in Jesus Christ. The idea is to bolster the numbers in church while at the same time spreading the influence of the church in the township. The RPCSA is not the only denomination to do the crusade; other church groups like the Methodists do it as well.

There is a Christian commandment to go out into the world and make disciples (Mark 16:15). This practice is in line with that commandment. It is announced in good time that the church would

be involved in *uhlaselo* and people are urged to be there. People congregate at a certain spot in the township, open the service, and open the text to be used for the crusade and then start the march in the township streets. This moving group of people is called *inqwelo* (wagon). The *inqwelo* would have a number of stops along the way, where the preacher would start talking to those who are watching and ask them to make a decision to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. A number of people would jump onto *inqwelo*. When they finally get to church their particulars are taken down and they are advised to come to services and join the confirmation classes.

3.2.2. Ukugqogqa (altar call)

During major services, like Good Friday and *imvuselelo* (revival service), an altar call is made. A person is designated for this job before the service starts. He stands up and appeals to those who, as it were, stand outside the grace of God to submit to its power and come forward to join forces with others. Bursts of singing often punctuate Ugqogqa's message, while those who were touched by the message make their way to the front. Someone will be waiting for them to take down their details and what they are standing up for. After a while *ugqogqa* will then give an opportunity to the scribes to read what they have gathered from those who responded to the altar call. The bulk of those who respond would be asking for prayers and *guquka phantsi kwelizwi* (lit. convert under the Word). There are those who will want to join the church, saying that they have been idle in the township

and making themselves vulnerable to the temptations of the world (*izilingo zomhlaba*). After the reading of names the congregation would be asked to pray for those who have decided to join the church and those who asked for prayers. The entire congregation then prays, and afterwards one of the elders is asked to address the new recruits, who are then told to go to a room where they will be attended and told what they would be expected to do. These recruits would then attend confirmation classes, where they are introduced to the Christian faith and the structures of the church. They are required to take these classes and at the end they have to take an oral confirmation test, after which they would be conferred with full membership of the church.

3.3. Reinforcement

The different church organisations play a significant part in the life of the church. They each, in their own way, teach their members what it means to be part of the church. Each organisation caters for the needs of a particular sector in church, but sometimes there are overlaps. There is a tendency among some young men to hold membership in both the Youth Fellowship and Amadodana; the same also applies to some young women who are in both the Youth Fellowship and the Young Women's Manyano (which is a sub-group of the Manyano). These overlaps are crucial in that these youths bring back what they learn from the senior groups to the youth group. The common factor among all the organisations is their commitment to

inculcating a sense of loyalty and commitment to the church and its ministry in their members. They all, in their own ways, encourage members to make contributions to the church as they are required. They also help individual members to grow and develop spiritually. In each organisation a recruit has a trial period before integration into the organisation. The trial period is the liminal stage in Van Gennep's scheme. During this period recruits are at the margins of organisations; they are taught and encouraged to observe what the "initiated" are doing and how they are behaving. Once the seniors are satisfied that they have done and learnt enough, they are then incorporated. They are no longer *abanqonqozi/abalingwa* but full members of their organisations. The incorporation is done through rituals of incorporation or integration.

3.3.1. Women's Manyano

At RPCSA one meets women clad in white blouses, black skirts, black shoes, black hats, and a badge with an emblem of the church. The badge has a sign of the cross. They use what is known as the St Andrew's cross in their badges- this is a slanted cross, since it is believed that St Andrew said that his cross could not be straight, it would only be straight when he reached his destination (heaven). These women form the backbone of the church. Their main function, apart from fund-raising, is a deeply spiritual one. They provide a spiritual haven for women, and a forum *apho bephalaza intlungu yabo khona* (where they share their pains and struggles).

The Manyano are divided into two groups. The Thursday group for those who are self-employed and housewives, and the Saturday group for women working outside the home. Each group has its office bearers. The wife of the Minister is the president of this ministry, playing the role of a pastor. The two committees constitute the executive committee of the Manyano in the congregation under the leadership of the minister's wife (*umama uMfundisi*).

The committee has the responsibility to organise meetings, collect money, to implement resolutions made by the general meeting, to teach new recruits about the organisation and what it stands for. New recruits are called *abanqonqozi* (knockers- an imagery of someone knocking at the door and the door being opened for them is used here). Such imagery clearly shows that before integration into the group new recruits remain outsiders or are at the margins of the group. They have to "knock" at the door first before they could be let in. The act of "knocking" is the initial socialisation where the new recruit is made aware of the group's mission and vision.

Before *umnqonqozi* is made into a member there is a trial period. During this period she is expected to attend Manyano meetings and prayers regularly. Though she might be receiving instruction on the Manyano constitution from one of the leaders, most of the learning takes place in meetings and prayer meetings. *Umnqonqozi* must satisfy the leadership that she is ready to be a member by being able to

answer questions relating to the Manyano and the Christian faith. Once she meets all the requirements, the committee would then recommend that she be bloused, which is a ritual of incorporation or integration into the group. Only the wife of the minister is authorised to blouse people. The blousing ceremony is called *ukunxiba/ukwembathisa* (dressing them up). It is as though one was naked before, without any clothing. This ceremony thus dresses the recruit appropriately and also recognises her as a full member of the group.

The special church uniform is important because,

... special church garb came to distinguish the devout at a time when Western clothing alone had lost its own significance as a symbol of Christian affiliation. Indeed, being "bloused" by the prayer union was a solemn milestone of a woman's religious commitment, a reward for upright living, a public proclamation of marital respectability (Gaitskell, 1997:258).

The Manyano blouse is treated with respect because it is not an ordinary piece of clothing. It is worn to do God's work. Once someone puts it on, there is a feeling that the spirit of God envelops her. The church community has a dim view of someone who goes out to fight wearing her blouse. In other words, one is not supposed to sin while clad in church uniform.

During the *ukunxiba/ukwembathisa* ceremony new members come into the sanctuary in a procession still wearing their *ubunqonqozi* uniform, carrying lit candles, led by one of the leaders, with the

president at the end of the procession. The rest of the congregation is on its feet humming a song for this occasion. One of the leaders at this point says words of encouragement to these women in poetic form. Once they all take their places in front of the altar the president makes her speech. In the speech, she welcomes them into the Manyano family, explains what is expected of them (especially not to disgrace the uniform), and the difficulties they are likely to experience as Christians (and women in particular). After the speech each woman is robed with a white Manyano blouse and a hat both of which she has paid to have made for her. After this ceremony these women would be fully integrated into the Manyano. As in traditional initiation, a bond develops between women who went on trial at the same time. They share the joys and frustrations of the process and appreciate each other's encouragement during trying times.

The Manyano are a very crucial part of the church. Gaitskell (1995:211) pointed out that this movement started with African women coming together as mothers; furthermore, "historical accounts of the manyano, ... also suggest these women's groups constitute a powerful female response to Christianity". Thus the use of terms like, *oomama bomanyano* (mothers of the manyano), *oomama bomthandazo* (mothers of prayer), *izintombi zokuvuma* (singing and praising ladies/women), and *oomama bebhatyi* (mothers of the blouse-referring to their uniform). These terms are used interchangeably to describe the character and work of this organisation.

The main focus of the Manyano is preaching and prayer but they have other activities like giving each other support in the time of need, as well as fund-raising for the church. Why does preaching and prayer have such an appeal to African women?

The appeal of "praying and preaching" to Africans should be seen in the light of the indigenous traditions of oral expression in which women shared – oratory, folktales, and praise poems vigorously performed to a convivially responding group. Prayer in precolonial African religion was spoken, corporate, and spontaneous. Africans also valued participation by as many people as possible in public communal deliberations, another emphasis taken over by the prayer groups. (Gaitskell, 1997:261)

Pauw's (1975:93) observation about the Manyano is that "one could not miss the emotional tenor of their devotions, their legalism and formalism and the closed nature of their organisation". Because of the heavy burden of being a mother, women regard this forum as a place where they open their hearts and share their problems with the group. Some of the problems that are shared are about husbands who are not Christians who are heavy drinkers, have affairs, and do not give adequate financial support to the family; as well as problems with neighbours or disobedient children. The rest of the group would offer words of comfort and advice, as well as prayers.

3.3.2. Amadodana

The term *amadodana* (young men) is misleading because this group is composed of men of all ages. Men come together to experience their faith as men. They have discussions and prayers. *Amadodana* are a cradle for most lay preachers; meetings and services are set up in such a way that all members at some point get a chance to give a testimony or their interpretation of the text that was read (*ukungqina ngelizwi elifundiweyo*). New members learn from old ones and those in the leadership how to do things and what is expected of them, i.e., how to sing and to preach. People learn the style of preaching as well.

3.3.3. Fundraising

Umjikelo ka February is an annual fundraising effort, which involves the entire congregation. It is the responsibility of all members to make sure that the church does not struggle financially. The congregation is divided into zones with the elder having an oversight on all activities. In executing his responsibilities, the elder is helped by a deacon. It is the deacon who does all the hard work of collecting money from people and encouraging them to give.

Umjikelo ka February is organised in the form of a competition with the winning zone getting a big trophy. Zones are also put in blocks and the block that contributes most money gets the biggest trophy on offer. The event starts at 8.30am on a Sunday morning. The senior pastor draws a roster of how the zones will do their presentations.

Each time a zone is called, members congregate next to the front door, put up their banner, start their song and then proceed to the altar where the money table is. During this movement to the front other members of the church join in the singing and encourage them. Once they get close to the altar the leader of the Zone would stop them from singing and take the podium to make a short speech. The speech is a preamble to the handing in of *ingxowa* (contribution). The speech usually starts with a quote from the Bible, which is said to accompany the contribution. It goes on to explain the difficulties experienced during the course of the year while *besakha ingxowa* (they were building up their purse). Some elders use this opportunity to publicly reprimand members who were problematic during the course of the year. The speech goes on to recognise the efforts of those who co-operated (no one is called by name). Before *ingxowa* is handed over to the counters, it has to have *umondlalo* (an accompaniment). *Umondlalo* is reminiscent of an African custom that a king is never buried alone. Tradition has it that a few people were killed in order to keep the king company and protect him from the heat and cold of the soil. These people would look after the king and minister to his needs. *Ingxowa* has to be accompanied by more money.

When people put their money on the table, some make short speeches. In these short speeches some contribute certain amounts in honour of a departed relative, who may not have been a member. Since some members have generations of departed relatives who were

church members, it is not unusual to hear somebody giving an amount and dedicating it to the memory of a grandfather or grandmother.

The important point here is that the elder is demonstrating, to the whole congregation, his authority as leader by speaking on behalf of his zone. He shows everybody that he is the head of this group. The minister might be in charge at congregational level but at zone level he is in charge. He makes his speech and puts his *umondlalo* and then allows others in the zone and supporters to do the same. The *ingxowa* is very special because it is the result of hard work and dedication by all concerned. One deacon said "I knock off at work at 7pm, and then get on with my work for God". Individuals in the zone sacrifice a lot in the process of building up *ingxowa*; some sacrifice huge sums from their family budgets, pensioners part of their allowances, children are sent to go from door-to-door asking for donations. The presentation of *ingxowa* then is the culmination of this process. Like Jesus, when he approached Jerusalem for the last time, people put down their garments and tree branches to serve as a mat where his donkey walked; the same can be said of *ingxowa* because it is special to people who worked for it, and it cannot be put on a bare table but something has to be laid on the table before it. That is what *umondlalo* symbolically means. The bags in which money is carried are specially made for this occasion and usually have beautiful decorations with the number of the zone sewn on to it. There is a sense of pride, which

all members have about belonging to a zone. Their *ingxowa* reflects who they are and their achievements. They are happy that theirs, no matter how big or small, makes a contribution to the project of uplifting the congregation. There is a sense of satisfaction and pride in all zone leaders after the presentation. Winning is not everything, people take pride in the fact that they made a contribution to the grand-total and that is what matters most. This fact was confirmed by one of the winning leaders in 2000 who said:

I am very happy that I am able to make a contribution to the furtherance of God's work. The honours and the trophies are not important to me. I am not doing this for personal glory but for the glory of the Lord. I pray that God should give me strong legs to walk around doing His work for Him.

For this event other people dress in colourful attire and others their church uniform. After all the zones have presented their contributions the results are announced. The first announcement is that of the grand total which everyone is pleased with, the minor positions all the way to the winner, and after that the block winner is announced. All the trophies are awarded to those who won them. The leader of the winning zone makes a victory speech, in which the efforts of those who contributed are acknowledged. Winning zone elders always have a word of encouragement and appreciation for the work done by other zones.

The minister thanks and congratulates everyone for their contribution to such an important effort for the church. He acknowledges that times are difficult economically but that people still have a heart and courage to share some of their limited resources with the work of the church. Those who did well are encouraged to do better and those who struggled are encouraged not to despair. He delivers this message from the heart with love and compassion for his congregation. He, in conversation, said, "this is a wonderful group of people. Do not think that this is the end, they still loyally make their monthly contributions".

3.4. Kinship terminology

The use of kinship metaphors is prevalent at RPCSA. There are a number of these metaphors used at different times. On a daily basis, when people meet and relate to one another, and talk about other members, they would use terms like *Mzawane* (male, *bazawane*) and *dade* (female, *bodade*). In addressing a group one would say *Bazawane no dade* (brothers and sisters). The metaphor assumes that they all belong to the same family. According to Anderson (1992: 5):

Bazawane was originally a Zulu word which spoke of a group of people who felt some identification with each other because of the common goal or task, those who were doing something together. It is a word that describes the strong sense of community that exists among African people. Today the word is used throughout South Africa amongst African Pentecostals

and other Christians to refer to brothers and sisters in Christ with whom they feel a particular family relationship.

In Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal, Christians of all denominations use the term *bazalwane* as a generic term for believers and members of the family. The English equivalent is "brethren". The term *bazalwane* is sometimes used pejoratively to refer to revivalist churches. These terms are reserved for those who are known.

During the sermons some of the following terms are used to fill gaps, while the preacher collects his thoughts about his next point: *Bantwana bendlu kaThixo* (children of the house of God) by constantly saying this, the preacher affirms all present as members of the family and eventual heirs to the kingdom. All those present are children of God and have a place in his house. Sometimes *Bantwana bendlu yokuthandaza* (children of the house of prayer) is used instead.

Zihlobo zam ezithandekayo (my beloved relatives), which is different from *bahlobo bam* (my friends), implies that these relationships are not temporary but permanent. *Bathandekayo eNkosini* (beloved), the Lord loves those who obey his commands, is a confirmation of the love the Lord has for his people. It is this love which sustains them, even though they are not perfect.

3.5. Material Support

In times of crises (death, accident, illness, etc.) a member of the congregation informs the leadership of the church immediately. This is a time of extreme anxiety to the member concerned and the support of the church is valued. People realise the importance and value of their church membership during such times. For some people these are turning points in their lives.

The church also tries her best to minister to the material needs of the needy. For example, there is the case of Mr Myeza who is mentally incompetent and lives with his grandmother. He reached an age when he was supposed to have been circumcised. It was not possible for him to undergo this important rite of passage, which meant that in the eyes of the community he was still a boy not a man. The ritual process of going to the initiation school and coming out is a costly one and his family could not afford it. Among other things it involves getting a new wardrobe for the person coming out. Eventually, he went to the school and the church rallied into action to get him a few items of clothing that he would need. It did not end there; people attended the coming out ceremony and supported him all the way. The church leaders who initiated this action were very grateful to the congregation for their generosity and understanding that they were one family, the Zwane family. Mr Myeza's family was touched by this act of the church and they sent a message of thanks to the congregation also expressing their gratitude. This is one of the

instances where the church comes out in support of one of its members.

Another important factor here is that circumcision is one of those customs that was scorned at by the missionaries but it has managed to survive. Among AmaXhosa, both Christian and traditional, this custom is still seen to be very important and has a contribution to make in the creation of the moral fibre of society. It is an open secret that church members, including those in the leadership, encourage this custom because, in the words of Luke Pato,

The people who adhere strictly to this custom still consider those who have not been initiated as those who will never really grow up. ... In their eyes, they remain in permanent state of being subhuman and immature adults without responsibilities because they have not been formally initiated into adulthood. (1997:58)

In other words, Mr Myeza would remain a boy in the eyes of the community regardless of his age. Initiation is a very powerful social barometer in this community. In order for a young man to be effective in a leadership position and gain the respect of his constituency, he must have been circumcised. It does not matter how talented and effective a leader this person might be, without initiation he is not an adult. In the eyes of the community he is still a "boy". This is the point where the traditional custom takes precedence over Christianity. Christian religion is being shaped in such a way that it accommodates the interests of a traditional custom. The aim of this custom is to

teach young people the discipline and responsibilities of adulthood. The custom is not only about enduring pain but it also serves a very important educational function. It is at this stage that boys are taught about what their responsibilities would be as household heads and the need to provide for their families.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter we have demonstrated gradual and carefully managed change. In Travisano's (1970) language this is an alternation because all the changes that a person undergoes are catered for in both the discourse and practice of the church. An individual grows and develops from one stage to another until one is confirmed as a member. Growth and development does not end at confirmation; a person continues to learn different things from other people. One can even be elected to a leadership position. At each developmental level one is constantly taught about what it means to be part of the church. The core of the membership is drawn from within, i.e., born within the church and those who marry into the church.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION:

MODELS OF CHANGE IN AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

1. Introduction

In this thesis conversion was defined as a process of change management. Change is a volatile and dynamic process, which causes anxiety and uncertainty among those going through it. As a result, it needs careful management and mediation. Various approaches were discussed in chapter 2, and all had something significant to contribute to our understanding of conversion. However, each explanation, on its own, does not investigate all possible angles to this complex process. For us to have a deeper and broader understanding of the process, a multi-disciplinary approach is necessary. Such an initiative will have more explanatory power as it is an interpenetration of various theories and it draws from their strengths.

First, the historical context is important in understanding the processes that shaped conversion experiences. The socio-economic and political dynamics have a bearing on the shape and direction of the process of change. The historical approach acknowledges the adversarial encounters between Africans and missionaries in which material and intellectual interests were at stake. The history of these encounters is important in understanding the nature of Christianity

in South Africa. African converts played an important role in the establishment of Christianity as an indigenous resource. Black mainline churches and the AICs draw from it in their resource mobilisation efforts. Ranger (1987) pointed out that Christianity in the twentieth century had become an aspect of an African identity. It became a readily available resource from which to draw strategies for self-identification and group formation. He further argued that aspects of AIC practice that have been heralded as being continuous with African belief and practice, such as spiritual healing, prophecy, and exorcism, are equally aspects of Christianity. In South Africa Christianity is seen as an important component of the religious landscape. The majority of people in the crime-ridden, disease-infested and poverty-stricken township of Gugulethu identify themselves with some form of Christianity. Since the advent of democracy and majority rule in South Africa in 1994 there is a greater religious freedom. Africans openly acknowledge their participation in indigenous religious practices.

Second, reference groups are socialisation and re-socialisation agencies. They provide blueprints of how society ought to be organised. The individual derives his or her identity from a reference group and is socialised into its world of discourse. The idea of a reference group is important for self-identification and self-definition, as it highlights the role of social structures in individual identity formation and re-formation. The reference-group has a vision, values,

beliefs and morals. As a result, individuals refer to the reference-group when "evaluating people, situations, and life projects" (Hefner, 1993:25). They provide individuals with tools to decipher and make sense of the world around them, while at the same time giving them a sense of selfhood and humanness. Reference groups are historical entities. They came into existence as a result of socio-historical and ideological factors. In the process of their formation, reference groups mobilise various religious and cultural resources as a way of defining person and place for its members. They create a symbolic meaning system, which distinguishes them from other groups. They appropriate symbols and give them meaning in accordance with their vision. Actually, "meaning is not something waiting to be 'discovered'" but, it is "always emerging, changing, and 'at stake' in the strategic, contested process of negotiation" (Chidester, 1991:xiv). Therefore, meaning is constructed to serve the interests of the group. Since such groups claim to own appropriated symbols, they believe that they can interpret them in the way they like.

Third, converts are active in the process of their conversion. Ikenga-Metuh (1987:12) was critical of the view that conversion was imposed on Africans, because "Africans and African religions responded to Islam and Christianity through conversion". Conversion, in this context, does not mean uncritical embracement of either Islam or Christianity but critical engagement with the two religions. Such critical engagement is evident in encounters documented by Simensen

(1987) and John and Jean Comaroff (1991) between Africans and Christian missionaries, in which the two groups were involved in material and intellectual exchanges. In these exchanges each group defined being human in terms of resources at its disposal. Horton (1971) and Opoku (1993) observed the dynamism and openness of African thought to other explanations of reality as reasons for such exchanges and the eventual embracement of both Islam and Christianity. The IsiXhosa and IsiZulu terms *ukuguquka* (turning, returning, re-turning) and *ukukholwa* (believing, having confidence) are processes where the convert plays an active role. These dynamic terms have been given different meanings in different contexts. The dynamism of African thought has been demonstrated in the way in which Christianity was translated into an indigenous idiom. This dynamism is crucial in understanding the processes of change among Africans.

Ukukholwa (to believe or believing) is an important aspect of the process of conversion. It is the central pillar of the group's world of discourse. It is the confidence, trust, and faith that an individual has in the efficacy of the group's resources and strategies to manage and mediate change. It is an element that all members must have in order to maintain group unity. Members must have confidence in the group's ability and capacity to mediate and manage their conversion experience. In the crisis model an individual must have confidence in the power of the healer-prophet to successfully mediate or manage the

crisis. It is important for the client to have confidence and trust in order to participate actively in the resolution of his or her crisis. Healer-prophets inform their clients that only the Holy Spirit has power to heal them. They ask their clients to have faith, trust, or confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit to deal with their crisis. Healing elements and medicaments given to clients derive their power and efficacy from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is said to direct the healer-prophet to the appropriate medicament for a particular ailment or crisis. Confidence in the crisis model is reinforced through other people's testimonies of how the church helped to mediate their crisis. These are stories of people who were able to get jobs, settle their marital problems, normalised relations with their neighbours, resolved their financial difficulties, and were healed from various ailments. They demonstrate the power that the church possesses. Since healing encompasses the individual and the environment, individual clients are integrated into society and the environment in which they live is also cleansed from the power of evil.

Fourth, the world of discourse is an important aspect in constructing individual identities and group formation. Murphy (2000:400) argued that discourse is a means by which the world is constructed. At the level of verbal discourse the text constructs its object, and at a sociological level society is constructed in and by discourse. Therefore, each world of discourse expresses its vision of society and how it should function. Language is highlighted as a means of identity

formation and knowledge construction. Among the BaTswana in the 19th and 20th centuries "[l]anguage was the medium in which political and religious allegiances were forged, and it changed constantly" (Landau, 1995:xxv). The world of discourse sustains and keeps alive the vision of the group and shapes the language used in myths, rituals, and other performances. Faith or religious conviction is framed in the language particular to the group.

A new recruit adopts the cosmology of the group and that enables him or her to understand and fully appreciate explanations about the source of his or her problems and the solutions to them. In other words, a new recruit has to share the group's world of discourse. An individual fully participates in the group's activities because he or she understands all explanations given. Rituals and other performances are underpinned and sustained by the world of discourse, as it is a theoretical framework within which all performances take place. The nature and style of the performances are determined by the world of discourse.

Fifth, the approaches mentioned above lead to an understanding of the process of conversion as a negotiation. Negotiation involves exchanges in the world of ideas. Furthermore, it involves the mobilisation of resources and formation of strategies to define person and place. This process leads to the creation of the world of discourse which sustains the rituals and other practices of a group. The vision

of the group is kept alive in its world of discourse. For Snow and Machalek (1983, 1984) and Travisano (1970), conversion is marked by the change in an individual's world of discourse. Such a change implies turning away from the previous world of discourse and towards another one. New members learn the language and rhetoric of the group and its method of delivery (oratory). In the black townships in Cape Town it is common that new members learn from the older members how to testify. New members spend sometime in the group observing others before standing up to make their testimonies.

Finally, all these elements help to explain conversion as change management. Processes of change take place within a social historical context. Individual identity is connected to a social world, and social groups are responsible for the management of the conversion experience or process through the exposition of various layers of the group's belief system, morality, values and vision.

Social groups use resources at their disposal to manage and mediate change for their members. Each social group has a set of strategies it uses for this purpose, such as, rituals. Social groups are crucial in the socialisation and re-socialisation processes. However, the role of individual converts should be acknowledged because without their co-operation and participation the process would not succeed. That is why it is important that members must have confidence, trust, or faith in the ability and capacity of the group to manage the process for

them. Social groups have to introduce new recruits to the talk and reasoning of the group as a way of building group unity.

In the research undertaken in Gugulethu and KTC two models of change management emerged, the crisis and growth models. In each model there are resources and strategies used to manage the process of change for members. Change is a volatile and uncertain process that needs to be carefully managed.

The two models of conversion that have been considered, the crisis model and the growth model, are both Christian and African in drawing upon religious resources and developing strategies for using those resources to manage change in the lives of individuals and the formation of communities. They are strategies to negotiate being human in an urban township context. The two models have the same goal, that of defining being human in an urban context, but they use different routes to reach that goal.

What is obvious in the two models is that in their processes of defining being human, they developed different emphases. It is this fact that has been exploited by those who wanted to exclude the AICs from the category "Christian". They built a huge divide out of the different emphases. The Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians have different theologies, traditions and visions but there has never been an attempt to say that any of them is less Christian than the

others. Historically, there has always been a mutual recognition and respect by all missionary organisations in South Africa.

Perhaps the AIC phenomenon was not expected to flourish in the way it did, because it did not represent orthodox Christianity. For example, the case of the Independent Methodist Church in Swaziland, which the white Methodist leadership predicted would not survive beyond the founder Joel Msimang's lifetime, has managed to survive and grow (Balila, 1994:24). The influence of what Chidester (1996:27) calls the frontier classification of world religions is evident in how the AICs are perceived and classified. The frontier classification system put the people of Southern Africa in the category of ancestor worshippers. The influence of ancestor worship was believed to be dominant in the AICs. Therefore, they could not be "authentically" Christian. This judgement about the AICs permeated the discourse of ordinary Christians who ridiculed these churches as *oozenzele* (self-made churches or do-it-yourself churches).

For missionaries, orthodox Christianity was supposed to be dominated and controlled by European leadership reflecting a Western cultural orientation and its values. There was also failure to grasp the complexity of Christian development among Africans in mission or mainline churches. Sundkler (1987) in exploring African Church history demonstrated how much Africans participated in the promotion of Christianity. He suggested that there must be a new way

of writing African Church history. He asserted that, over the years, scholars have studied the AICs in an attempt to find something that is “authentically” African. A lot of effort was put into analysing their healing practices and other rituals in an attempt to link them to an African past. In the process, the mainline churches among Africans were ignored. It was through the efforts of the African clergy and laity that Christianity was spread to many areas of Africa outside mission stations. Africans within the mission churches played a crucial role in making Christianity truly their own. Therefore, it is important to understand the dynamics of both mission and indigenous churches in the making of African Christians. Africans in these churches engaged with Christianity and the end product was a religion that is not foreign but indigenous, because, “[r]eligion itself is an activity of symbolic and material negotiation that is fluid and mobile, relational and situational, distinctive and diverse, collective and personal” (Chidester, 1994:10). Christian symbols were appropriated and adapted to serve the interests of African Christians. The process of appropriation and adaptation changes all the time due to socio-economic and political factors.

Commenting on animal sacrifices among AICs in Lesotho, theologian Stan Nussbaum observed that, “Independent church thanksgiving sacrifices are not an attempt to accommodate something in the traditional religion but a new ritual considered to be definitely within a Christian context” (1984:53). The end product is as a result of

reflection by Africans on African religions and cultural heritage and Christian teachings. AICs crafted a religion that reflected the influences of the above resources. The point has to be made that the AICs are not a replacement for African religion or orthodox Christianity. They "are complex strategic negotiations in which symbolic forms are formulated, appropriated, manipulated, and mobilized to carve out a human identity and a place for that human to stand and to act as a human being" (Chidester, 1989:21).

In other words, AICs might have Christian, Western and African influences but they are attempts by Africans to be human in an increasingly hostile environment of poverty, crime, violence, corruption, unemployment, and uncertainty.

The influences of missionaries are still evident, but the AICs have taken all of that as part of their heritage, as part of their church, as part of who they are. It is clear that the two models of conversion appropriate the same symbols, but they develop the meaning and power of those symbols in different ways.

The two models considered are attempts by African Christians to define being human in a volatile urban context, marred by crime, poverty, and unemployment. They operate within a religious landscape that is dominated by various shades of Christianity and African traditional religion.

2. Comparisons

2.1. About these two models

It is noteworthy that there are instances where both communities (St Johns and RPCSA) use aspects of the other model. However, such acts do not undermine the dominant model within the group. There are instances when somebody at RPCSA (an example of the growth model) has a crisis at home, after having spent a lot of time away from church, and would come back and claim to convert, thus asking the rest of the group to accommodate and help them through the crisis. The time when this person was away from the rest of the group would be interpreted as a period in which he or she was lured by the trickery of the evil one. For example, elder Ziqubu from the RPCSA grew up in church. As he became older, he stopped attending church. He experienced major family problems and he decided to come back. He was warmly welcomed. When someone returns to the fold people would rejoice and this will be seen as a new beginning, a conversion. The analogy of the prodigal son (Luke, 15:11-32) is used and parallels are drawn between the two situations. The church is obliged to forgive and accept this individual back because forces beyond any control possessed him. At St John's (an example of the crisis model) one also has members who were born of parents who are members of the church and they see it as part of their identity. They grow up within the church and learn the rules.

Crisis and growth are observable in both groups at some point in their spiritual journey. These are times where a person feels that it is a defining moment in their lives in terms of their spiritual development. These are mostly crisis moments, especially a death in the family or other misfortune, where one feels that God is directly intervening in their lives to give direction. After this moment there has to be spiritual growth and development which is catered for in both groups. Both groups acknowledge the importance of nurturing new converts as well as to keep the old members well "fed" spiritually.

The outward projection of the St John's understanding of conversion is a crisis model. It is part of the recruitment strategy. It is not properly explained that this is the initial contact and what then happens, as a person becomes a member of the church. Of course there is growth and development as a convert is introduced to the church hierarchy, the church norms, the church procedure, and a definition of who they are as members of St John's. As part of the journey an individual has ups and downs and through those one is able to grow and develop. The two models are then in operation side by side, but the official view is that conversion occurred at initial contact when one was rescued from a crisis, as such, it is reinforced all the time in prayer meetings and services.

According to Sundkler (1987:74) scholars have given Independent Churches a lot of attention in search for something "authentically

African". This search has led to a situation where the Africanness of Black mainline churches is undermined or simply neglected. The AICs are perceived to be the guardians of African culture and tradition. However, the situation on the ground is much more complex. Black mainline churches shaped Christianity into a language and idiom that is African. It is true that there are certain areas of African beliefs and practices that were excluded from the dominant church discourse but this does not mean that people in their individual capacities have also not embraced them.

2.2. Rituals

2.2.1. Rituals of incorporation

Rituals of incorporation are performed to symbolically make new members part of the group. Such rituals are important for an individual's identity formation and transformation. After the ritual, the individuals concerned fully identify with the group. His or her identity would now be linked to the group; and he or she gets a sense of belonging. The approach to incorporation at RPCSA is growth and developmentally orientated. There are different stages toward confirmation. Confirmation is an end product of a process of education, development and growth. In other words, incorporation is a process, which starts at baptism (infant), to Sunday school, to the confirmation class, and finally culminating with the confirmation ritual. Once people in charge are satisfied with the development of an individual at one stage, he or she would be promoted to the next. The

initial stage of baptism is through sprinkling during public worship. The child is "claimed" for the church and the onus is upon parents to raise him or her in accordance with the vision of the church. Metaphors used here are "sowing" and "growing". Parents are to sow seeds of righteousness in their children so that they can grow in the knowledge of God. The role of parents is crucial in the realisation of the goals of the growth model because they are the primary socialising agents. Children look up to them.

The symbolism of water is very significant. In the Christian tradition water has many different characteristics. First, water played a crucial role in the creation of all things (Genesis. 1:2, 6-7). Second, it served to destroy creation (Gen. 6:17- 7:24). Third, it delivered the Children of Israel from an advancing Egyptian army at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:26-31). Fourth, it was used by John the Baptist to baptise Jesus at the River Jordan, which launched Jesus' ministry (Matt. 3, Mark 1:9-12, Luke 3). As Jesus was baptised the Holy Spirit anointed him. In baptismal water there is new birth as well as anointing. Fifth, there were pools which had healing powers, e.g., Bethesda (John 5:2), Siloam (John 9:7). Jesus used water as a cleansing and healing agent. He sent the blind man to go and wash at the pool of Siloam. All the above-mentioned properties of water make it a powerful symbol. Hence it has been appropriated at St John's for healing and cleansing.

For Presbyterians baptism is new birth. The water of the womb brings a child to birth, and so baptismal water brings the child to new birth. The child becomes a new being. Adults who were not baptised as infants are baptised subject to their confession of faith in Jesus. An adult has to make a self-conscious decision to make a commitment.

Confirmation, as mentioned above, is a culmination of a number of stages. The individual concerned must have attended Sunday school where some instruction was given to supplement that given by parents. Confirmation into membership in full communion gives one access to the sacred power in the church. The divine power is dangerous and it has to be approached with caution. Individuals need specialised knowledge in order to be able to tap into the sacred power. It is the duty of the leadership of the church to provide education, guidance and instruction in this regard as stated in the *Manual of Law, Practice and Procedure in the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa*:

The instruction and preparation of the young communicants is the special duty of the minister and of the Session. The Session must take care that such as are ignorant or scandalous be not admitted to membership till it is satisfied as to their knowledge and repentance. (1958:6)

The rule clearly excludes those whom the Session is not satisfied with, in terms of their mastery of, and competence in specialised knowledge required of all members. Since the Session are custodians and

protectors of the collective *seriti* of the church, they have to ensure that only those who would not compromise the integrity of the church are allowed in. Those who compromise the integrity of the church are excommunicated, which means they are excluded from certain key church activities, such as participation in the Lord's Table, as well as being removed from all offices held. They are cut off from the activities of the church. The confirmation ritual is performed in public worship where new members are accepted in full communion through the shaking of hands. Confirmation allows one to participate in church organisations.

At St John's members believe in the baptism of adults through a triple immersion in "living waters" (Sundkler, 1961:206), whereas children only receive the blessings (Mark 10: 13-16). Living water refers to the river, sea or any moving water. It has to be this kind of water because baptism is not only a new birth or a sign of being part of the "flock" but also cleansing. It cleanses one of the sins of the previous life. Sundkler (1961:207), commenting about the use of flowing water, said that it is "efficacious in washing and rapidly removing sin, sickness and pollution". Baptismal waters take that sin away. Comaroff (1985:201) pointed out that baptismal water dissolves former identities. Once former identities are dissolved new ones are established on the basis of the vision of the church. The individual is reborn into the family of St Johns. According to Mhlongo, the biographer of the prophet, and Mrs Melusi, Bishop Masango was given

power to bless water to heal people. All healers at St Johns dispense water that belongs to Baba Masango. It is made very clear by members of the congregation that the water they drink after every service, or have a bath, steam or enema with, is Baba Masango's water. They would normally say,

We are grateful to Baba Masango for having sent us MaMelusi from Johannesburg, to come and give us Baba Masango's water. She gives us water to drink and wash with.

Water is not only used at baptism, but the entire healing system depends on water. Baptism happens alongside another important healing ritual, called *isiwasho* (cleansing). After new members have been baptised, the sick and other members of the congregation would then be dipped for cleansing. *Isiwasho* removes all the impurities and evil forces that attach themselves to people.

Baptism is the most important requirement for membership at St John's. There are no formal confirmation classes, but what is important to them is the new member's commitment to the church. It is only after baptism that a new member is issued with the blue and white church uniform. The blue represents special peace and the white for purity (Thomas, 1999:91). Through baptism the old person (identity) dissolves and a new one is established. The uniform symbolises the newly established identity, which makes one part of the group. By putting on the uniform, the new convert becomes one with the group. It is a sign that she or he has chosen the group and it

has accepted him or her. Social relations are redrawn; all previous identities fall away. The uniform symbolises oneness in spirit– it does not matter whether one is a parliamentarian or a domestic worker, all become the same. A sense of oneness and sameness is established. The new identity cuts across economic and social statuses and membership of St John's become the member's primary identity. For those who come because of *ingulo emhlope* (white illness) there will be people who will mentor and guide them. They will be taught *melao ya kereke* (rules of the church). The rules are the special knowledge for approaching the divine. Mrs Melusi teaches about the rules mostly at the 7pm service. Since ministers are the last to get the platform to speak at services, she has enough time to observe how people do things and then she can correct them where they went wrong.

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated that even though the two churches understand baptism to mean rebirth, they have different ideas about who has to be baptised, how, why and where. The major difference between the two churches is the baptism of children. St John's believes that children can only be blessed and not baptised because they cannot publicly declare their faith in Jesus. At RPCSA they believe that Jesus commanded them to baptise children. The place of baptism is another major difference between the two churches. At St Johns they believe in baptism by triple immersion. John, who also baptised Jesus, practised this type of baptism. The prophet Masango was also commanded to have this type of baptism.

In Mhlongo's words "a word came to Baba Petros John Masango and told him to seek the baptism of John in the river" (n.d.:6). For them it has to happen in a river, sea or pool– but the whole body has to be immersed. The RPCSA practice, however, is to baptise children and new converts who were never baptised before, through sprinkling on the forehead during public worship, that is, in church. But, there is a provision for baptism to take place in another place other than the place of worship. Water is very crucial at St John's because everything revolves around it, while at RPCSA it is only significant at baptism. For the RPCSA, baptism is only the beginning of the process of incorporation, culminating at confirmation, while at St John's baptism is the beginning of a new life for the individual as a member of the church. There is no structured education programme for new converts and most of the teaching about the church procedures and rules is gleaned from the speeches and sermons of the minister.

2.2.2. Rituals of celebration

Good Friday and Easter are the commemoration of the death and resurrection of Jesus. For St John's it is a national festival where congregations from various parts of South Africa congregate at National headquarters. This is one of the few times when the Lord's Supper (Eucharist) is celebrated. Like all other *imigidi*, there will be baptism and *isiwasho*. On the other hand, at RPCSA the celebration is localised and takes place in Gugulethu. All the church organisations are given an opportunity to celebrate; a service is set aside for each

organisation during one of the days over the weekend and a particular group will organise all details of that service. They also use the celebration to recruit new members and revive those who have “fallen”. It has been my observation that in Gugulethu the busiest time of the church calendar is Good Friday and Easter, whereas, during Christmas very few people go to church.

In both churches at other services (St John’s: daily services, 5am service, 7pm service, and Sunday service; RPCSA: Sunday services) the power of God is celebrated. The difference is in the emphasis. St John’s celebrates the power of God in healing through the Prophets and the Angels. The prophets are acknowledged for having received the master plans for healing from God and for having revealed them to ordinary mortals. There is a sense that God can only be approached through the prophets as people preface their prayer with “*Nkulunkulu ka Baba Masango no Mme Anna* (God of Baba Masango and Mme Anna)”. There are also prayers for the sick, as well as the giving of holy water. Numerous people do the teaching or preaching, with the minister having a final say. After each of the preachers, the congregation bows and renders a prayer for them. All these practices are part of the strategy to keep them on a crisis-alert. There is a sense that because they have been “washed” in Baba Masango’s water, people have become vulnerable to crisis. Therefore, it is important for them to be alert all the time and do what the religious leadership asks of them.

On the other hand, at RPCSA they celebrate the saving power of God in Jesus. They celebrate through song and praise. A designated preacher does the preaching. Prayers are for thanksgiving and aversion of crisis, as well as for those who are experiencing problems. The church projects the image of a caring organisation. There is recognition that crises are not to be feared— they are seen as challenges to make one's faith strong. The celebration is geared toward "arming" the believers with the "armour" to deal with problems. Sermons deal with everyday issues but toward the end they implore people to be steadfast in their faith.

2.3. Tradition

The idea of the church is perceived differently by the two churches. That perception is part of each group's self-definition. St John's is said to be the church of the prophets, the church for the sick and troubled, and the deep and complicated church. On the other hand, at RPCSA it is their home church, which they suckled from their parents, it is the church of their forefathers. There is a contrast between a church of the prophets and a church of history.

The St John's church allows for discussion on the ancestors and even rituals to venerate them. Individuals often make remarks about *isinyanya sakokwethu* (family ancestral spirit) during services. There is continuity between church and home. On the other hand, at RPCSA there is discontinuity between church discourse and practice at home.

The issue of the ancestors is not part of that discourse, which does not mean that the church disapproves of them. Sometimes individuals refer to them in their speeches, especially during joyous occasions, like fundraising. One person alluded to “the bones of some dead leaders moving in their graves”, indicating that these leaders would have been happy with what is currently being done. Such statements indicate that the issue of the ancestors is part of the people’s resource base to which they appeal in times of crisis. People in their homes carry out rituals where ancestors are venerated, for example, house-opening rituals, unveiling of tombstones, and the initiation and circumcision of their sons.

RPCSA refer to their practice as *ubuRhabe* (Presbyterianism). The emphasis, though, is more on the history of the family of the individual. One member pointed out that her great-grandfather, her grandfather, and her father and now herself, are part of the Presbyterian family, which makes the church part of her heritage. She will do whatever is needed to impart that heritage to her children. The church is part of her identity.

At RPCSA people feel some historical connection and loyalty to the church. Most grow old there. This shows up in the large number of senior citizens, some of whom are sickly. There are regular visits to these people, especially those who are bed-ridden. The minister pays them visits and serve communion to them. The youth also visit them

to clean their homes and keep them company. Some of the youth have reported that they enjoyed visiting the elderly because in some cases the elderly tell them stories and tales. The youth also sing and read the Bible for them. By giving senior members of the church these regular visits, they are made to feel like they are part of the community. The women's *Manyano* also hold some of their Thursday prayer meetings in such people's homes. In such situations the church acts as an extended family.

At St John's there is intense concentration on healing, as it has been pointed out above, and the very ill are accommodated within the church complex. They are cared for and looked after by the minister and her assistants. The church community helps with prayers and gives some food to support the minister. She was very grateful to the individuals in the church who helped to extend her complex. She said they were people who were sick and got help from the church and now they were making such a contribution as a way of saying thank you. According to Mhlongo, Baba Masango and Mme Anna, were able to build a number of Temples through donations from grateful clients. The first major project was to build the St John's headquarters in Katlehong where rooms to accommodate the sick were built as well. The neighbours derogatorily called his church "the hospital". In other words, it is not unusual for satisfied clients to return the favour and do something good for the church.

The most significant part about the two churches is that in their discourse they draw a line between themselves and the “world”. *Iinto zangaphandle* (things of the “outside”) is a commonly used phrase at RCPSA. The implication is that even though they live in the township, their church membership makes them different from the rest of the township population. Church membership prescribes a certain kind of behaviour that is different from that of those who are not. Because of the moral teachings of the church, members- especially those in the leadership- are expected to be morally upright and be an example to the others, especially the younger generation. Similarly, at St John’s they instruct their members to uphold their morals so that the prophets would be able to help them. People are also instructed not to consult *izangoma* (traditional healers) because they are seen as using evil powers and they manipulate people, while St John’s, on the other hand, uses the power of God through the Prophets.

What makes the AICs attractive to researchers is the healing dimension that is often associated with traditional African healing practices. The point was made in chapter 3 that healing is a major component of the recruitment strategy at St Johns, which means that it is crucial in mediating crisis. Healing forms an important part of crisis management. Once healed, people are always on a crisis-alert. Healing normalises an abnormal situation. An individual would be restored to good health, and he or she would have a new realization that the crisis situation was meant to bring her close to the

community of faith. On the other hand, Sunday school and confirmation at the RPCSA forms an important part of the growth and development of youngsters. Basic information about the community and its work is disseminated to them gradually. This is an important time because *umuthi ugotshwa usemanzi* (a tree is bent while young). Youngsters are impressionable and as they grow older the church will be second nature to them.

Healing concerns not only the physical body but also the psychological and the social aspects of a person. In order for one to be restored to normality or to humanness all these aspects have to be harnessed. The patient has to believe in the power and efficacy of what comes out of the mouth of the prophet-healer. The patient must be prepared to do everything and pay attention to details in order to avert the crisis

The crusade (*uhlaselo*) is one of the strategies employed by the RPCSA to recruit people from the township. The township is understood to be full of people *abakude nofefe luka Thixo* (who are far from the grace of God). Part of the congregation would march through the streets of the township in order to make such people realise that the church is there for them. As they march, they sing and dance and stop at various points where one of them would address a group of people and invite them to join. The township appears like an enemy territory and the crusade is an attack launched by the church. Such an attack, in its

style, is reminiscent of the attacks launched by Joshua to Jericho. It is the soldiers of the cross marching for Jesus, in fulfilment of a Christian commandment to convert sinners.

2.4. Material Support

In terms of material support both churches have a system in place and a commitment to help their members in distress. It is during major crises in people's lives that this commitment is clearly visible. In times of death, church members, especially those in the vicinity, visit the bereaved family regularly to comfort them as well as rendering whatever help needed. It is part of church practice in both communities to make a financial contribution to meet the costs of the funeral. They also participate in regular prayers held at the bereaved home until the day of the funeral. The emotional support is taken beyond the day of the funeral. What we see here are two communities that have created a safety network for themselves. During the times where individual members feel the most vulnerable and exposed the Church comes around to reassure and give comfort.

2.5. Reinforcement

After recruiting members into their fold, each community has strategies to educate and make them comfortable. Such strategies are designed to meet the needs of each model. In terms of the crisis model, the reinforcement comes in the form of testimonies by those who were sick or had problems and now can be proud that they are

now healed or their problems have been solved. While I was doing participant observation, Mrs Melusi gave her own testimony. She told the congregation how she got her call. She said she ignored it for a long time and the last time she was very ill. Her parents tried all they could but it did not work. As the last resort, she was taken to Baba Masango. He told her that if she did not accept her call she was going to die. There was no need for her to occupy space and not do God's work. She made up her mind instantly and was baptised. From then on she was on her way to recovery. She also mentioned some of the things she did in her "previous" life. Mrs Melusi's story is similar to many stories told by healers in most AICs. The aim of such stories is to encourage people not to despair if they have problems. For those who are not completely healed it gives hope that one day they would be well and tell their stories as well.

The stories reinforce belief and faith in the power of healing, which the church has through the prophets. The fact that even their esteemed leader had to be "washed" in order to realise her potential encourages ordinary members. At this level there are no church organisations because the minister has her hands full with people who are not well. Mrs Melusi tried to start a Women's *Manyano* but it did not work out because some of the women worked till late. They could not have it on a Saturday because it is a day of healing.

In terms of the growth model, reinforcement is in the form of church organisations, as shown at the RPCSA. They are the Youth Fellowship, the Girls Christian Association, Women's Christian Association (*Manyano*) and *Amadodana* (Young Men's Christian Guild). Each of the organisations meets the spiritual needs of the sector of the congregation– they each deal with matters of interests to each group. However, the most important function is to reinforce what was taught from Sunday school to Confirmation. They reinforce the values and morals of the church. They each organise fund-raising events in order to help raise the finances of the church. Members are instructed about their responsibility as members of the church. A sense of loyalty to the church is built through uniforms. According to Xapile, a RPCSA minister,

There are members who see the uniforms merely as clothes that one would wear when on duty. In that case, it becomes a constant reminder that they are soldiers of the cross. It reminds them of their commitment to make disciples and to exercise their ministry. (2000:164)

2.6. Kinship terminology

The use of kinship terminology in the two churches, that is, RPCSA and St John's, highlights a sense of family, a sense of oneness and a sense of belonging. West (1975) observed the prevalence of the use of kinship terminology like "brother", "sister" and "family" among AIC members in Soweto.

This means that both churches project an image of a family. Family relations are marked by different positions members find themselves in it. The whole terminology is structured in such a way that all people feel that they are part of one family. Within the family there are different ranks, like mother and father and children (brother and sister). Spiritual leaders play the role of mother and father in both instances because they educate, give pastoral care and counsel, and at St John's it includes healing as well. In both cases individuals are said to grow and develop. This is one of the instances where the two models are seen operating side by side. People might have joined St John's because of crisis but once they have joined, the church has ways to educate and develop them. The spiritual parents ensure that they get all the necessary material to grow. However, at RPCSA there is a structured programme that caters for the education and spiritual needs of converts.

2.7. Gender

Women are numerically superior in both St John's and RPCSA. The irony is that there are no women at the top of the leadership hierarchies. Because of the patriarchal nature of our society, church leadership has been a male prerogative for a long time. Oduyoye (1986:124) made an important observation that "Church women are the acknowledged backbone of the church's finances and upkeep. Yet they rarely serve on church boards and when they do more often they are to represent 'women's interests' ". West observed among the AICs

in Soweto that there was an unwritten rule that a woman cannot become leader of her church, no matter how powerful and gifted she could be. He cites two cases where women were dynamic leaders, with powerful personalities, and healing powers. In both cases these women appointed their husbands as bishops. The husbands ended up leaving the running of the church to their wives because they did not have the charisma and gift of leadership. West (1975:52) referred to them as "reluctant bishops" because in most instances they opened services with prayer and handed over to the wives to do the rest.

It is within the context of patriarchy that the case of St John's split in the 1970s should be considered. Mrs Nku started the church and worked in partnership with her husband. The problems started after the death of Bishop Nku in a train accident in 1967. "While Mrs Nku was the effective leader of the church, it had an archbishop, who was constitutionally head of the church" (West, 1975:52). Mrs Nku then appointed her son to this position. During her husband's lifetime, Mrs Nku had full control of the church because he was her appointee. It was logical for her to want someone in that position who would recognise her as the sole leader. The bitter wrangling and eventual court battles with the elected archbishop Masango emanated from the fact she could not control him, as she would her son. West further reported that Masango "wanted more say in the church affairs than did Bishop Nku" (1975:67). In fact, Masango was not prepared to be a nominal leader, he wanted real power and he went to court to

challenge the decision by Mrs Nku to shorten his term as archbishop. The church was eventually split between Evaton (Mrs Nku) and Germiston (Mr Masango). In this event males went through courts of law to wrestle the authority of the female founder from her. Though she claimed divine authority the courts only interpreted the constitution of her church and made a ruling based on that.

The senior leadership at St John's at national level is male dominated. Women attain the status of being ministers but the title of bishop is reserved for men. Mrs Masango (Mme Anna) played a crucial role in her husband's work. She built a big St John's complex in Claremont, near Pinetown in KwaZulu Natal. This church is fondly referred to as *isonto lika mama* (mother's church). She is one of two women who are spoken of regularly. She is one of the prophets. Her title was Lady Archbishop. There are no other women who have risen to the same prominence as Mrs Masango and Mrs Nku.

At local level female leadership is not frowned upon at St John's. There are many congregations that are led by females. The majority of such women are healers and that is the most important activity at a local level. It is where people with problems, members and non-members, are helped (*bayasebenzelwa*). This is an area of operation in the church that requires that a person must possess the gift of healing. One is only responsible for a small group of people.

At RPCSA, on the other hand, the national leadership is also male dominated. Women play their leadership role within the women's *Manyano*. They are the ones who do most of the fund-raising for the church. The minister's wife presides over groups under the jurisdiction of her husband's ministry. Theoretically she could become president of the national *Manyano*. Opportunities for leadership for the lay women are there in *Manyano*, as well as in the congregation. There was a resolution by the national body to allow for the appointment or election of women elders. Currently, women act as deacons. They play a crucial role in the deacon's court, which looks after church properties. During the annual fundraising effort it is the deacons in the Zones who do most of the work. They collect money and encourage members to give. For a long time many churches had a problem with the ordination of women as ministers but that has changed in that RPCSA is one of those churches that have accepted woman ministers.

The General Assembly of the church recognised the women's *Manyano* (WCA) as an important organisation in the life of the church. Xapile reported that the General Assembly has made it a custom to invite them to give a report. In his words:

It has become a tradition of the RPCSA to give time to the WCA during the General Assembly meetings, to address the Assembly and make official presentations of financial support to various schemes and projects that the church as well as various congregations are involved in. (2000:162)

The WCA is treated like an organisation outside of the church. The General Assembly is depicted as an interested spectator. There is a sense in which this group is only invited because of the financial contributions they make. It is ironic that in his report Xapile does not say anything about resolutions on theological or ecclesiological matter as well as other important business of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, it is clear that women in the churches are treated as second-class citizens. Numerically they are the majority but the decision-making structures are still male dominated. Women are relegated to minor positions or heads of women's organisations. They are known for their financial contribution but given no platform to make ecclesiastical or theological contributions. They can exercise leadership in a small area but once it becomes larger it then requires male leadership. The tradition of leadership structure that is followed by most AICs, where a woman founder appoints a male to act as a leader, is indicative of the fact that women's leadership is not trusted. At St John's women prophets are referred to by their first names, for example, Mme Christina (Mrs Nku), and Mme Anna (Mrs Masango), whereas their male counterparts are addressed in a dignified way by their surnames, for example, Baba Masango or Ntate Matsotso. This might sound like a minor issue but it indicates that there is a sense in which women are placed in the same category as children.

2. Conclusion

The two churches are both African and Christian. They are both involved in ways of defining for themselves what it means to be human in an urban township context. They employ different strategies and tactics in their endeavours. In other words, they draw on more of the same resources but each elect to have a different emphasis. Each emphasis is determined largely by the missionary tradition from which they draw. Both churches define themselves as Christian. They draw on the Christian tradition. Firstly, they both use of the Bible as an important symbol. They have each appropriated it as a symbol of their own, and given themselves the right to interpret it their own way. Secondly, they both draw on the mission heritage. The mission churches continue to use, in a more adapted form, liturgies that came with missionaries. On the other hand, missionary teachings and other influences directly or indirectly influenced the AIC phenomenon. The earlier AICs broke away from the mission churches; they maintained the liturgy and confession of faith. The second string of AICs, that of the Zionist orientation, has the influence of John Alexander Dowie whose church sent missionaries to South Africa. Leaders who founded the AICs came from the mission churches. The prayer books that are used are mostly those of the mission churches from which the leader came.

African culture, customs and tradition feature prominently in the organisation of the two churches. One obvious example is the seating

arrangement. Men and women sit in different aisles and children at RPCSA occupy the third aisle, and at St John's even the children are separated. The style of preaching and the music have been influenced by traditional praise-poetry. Good singing inspires preachers. Another area that has persistently been present is ancestor beliefs and veneration. In fact, ancestors are a very important part of the cultural landscape of Gugulethu. It is a taken-for-granted fact that an average person believes in the ancestors and performs ancestor rituals. In fact, Bediako (1995:216) suggested that "ancestors represent a more enduring reality in African worldview". The case of the house-opening ritual by an elder at RPCSA is an indication of deep-seated beliefs in the community. Likewise, at St John's they have "respect for, and remembrance of their ancestors in their Christian faith and practice" (Thomas, 1999:61). Although the two models of conversion, that is crisis and growth, are different, each model uses some elements of the other. In the crisis model the signs of growth are apparent in firstly, their use of kinship metaphors denoting growth, nurturing, birth, feeding, sowing, rearing, maturing, and protecting and secondly, in the tradition of prophets as parents and providers. There is a popular song at St John's which says:

Baba Masango ngumelusi wami ungenzela konk' okuhle (Baba Masango is my shepherd, he does all that is good for me).

The message of the song is clear that Masango looks after them and provides for them. He can only provide for them if they belong to his family, his flock.

In the growth model there are events in people's lives, which change their perspective on things. Such crises bring them closer to the church and in their testimonies they identify them as their moments of conversion. Individuals who left the church for some reason, on their return also claim that something compelled them to return and that also is said to be a moment of conversion. It is, however, crucial to note that the use of elements of each model in the other does not undermine the dominance of that model. The crisis and growth still remain the distinguishing features of the two models.

Conversion was defined as a process of change management. It was demonstrated how the two groups used different strategies and resources to manage the process of change for their members. The crisis model starts by managing the crisis for the individual through healing rituals. Once they decide to be part of the group that process is managed through rituals of incorporation and maintained through teaching and mentoring. The growth model has different stages of development for individuals to go through. As they move up the stages, they mature in the faith. There are rites of passage, for instance, confirmation and acceptance into church organisation. Confirmation is when an individual comes of age in terms of church practice. They earn the right to sit at the Lord's table and the right to wear uniform of a church organisation of his or her choice (after meeting the requirements). It indicates maturity. It is the culmination of a number of years' work from Sunday school through the

confirmation classes. The church organisations serve to consolidate and reinforce what one has learnt. They keep on reviving one's faith.

Spear (1999:6) pointed out that "conversion to Christianity also involved fundamental reorientation of African religious beliefs and practices". Moreover, Africans were not passive recipients of the Christian religion but they engaged with it. The process of conversion was not a simplistic move from traditional religions to Christianity. In other words, Christianity was not an all-conquering force that destroyed everything on its way. The process involved the appropriation and reorientation of symbols from both traditional religions and Christianity. The product of this process reflected the influences of both traditional religions and Christianity. This product was neither an Africanized version of Christianity nor a Christianized version of traditional religion but an indigenous religion. It reflected the creativity and innovativeness of those who were involved. Neither the St John's church nor the RPCSA, is considered as an alien or foreign church by its members. All of them regard it as their own. Jean and John Comaroff (1991), in their work among the BaTswana, provide a useful demonstration of how Africans and missionaries were involved in a contest over symbol and meaning. Missionaries realised that in order to be heard they had to appropriate local symbols. They demonstrate this very well, especially with reference to the struggle over rainmaking. As the process unfolded Christianity was identified

as part of the African cultural landscape. It became an African resource.

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| 5. Mrs Nkawu (prophet-healer) | 20 May 1998 |
| 6. Miss Nosiki (young woman) | 26 May 1998 |
| 7. Mrs Thembani | 29 May 1998 |
| 8. Mrs Malowe (new recruit) | 23 June 1998 |
| 9. Miss Thobe (new recruit) | 4 October 1998 |

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- | | |
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