



## Chapter Six

### **ADMINISTRATION AND WORLDVIEW: Connecting with Culture**

We have explored administration from a task perspective. We have looked briefly at what six individual Christian leaders think about it, how they do it and some of the problems, frustrations and tensions they face. And we have examined the topic in a group setting, where various church backgrounds, traditions and practices added further insights. In other words, we have put our study of administration into a specific social and operational context. In doing so, we have noted the dual factors of worldview and personality playing a part in how administration is perceived and done.

In this Chapter, we want to investigate two actual narratives and delve into the related worldview factors affecting what happened in each. First, we will consider Joyce's story and discuss the factors involved, then follow that with Beki's story.

But before we travel down that road, we must first get our bearings. In Chapter One, we briefly defined worldview as "the way we see reality" (Hesselgrave, 1991: 197). As we have walked together with the co-researchers, we have discovered some specifics about Shona and Ndebele culture and worldview in particular. But we must now consider in a little more detail what we are talking about when we speak of worldview.

#### **1 What is Worldview?**

##### **1.1 In General Terms**

Sire following on from his landmark work on worldview (*The Universe Next Door*, 1976), seeks to address some outstanding questions from that. In his latest work (2004: 100-101), he points out that most worldview analysts explain the concept by beginning with the notion that it is a "system of beliefs", "a set of presuppositions" or "a conceptual scheme", but then he asks whether this is accurate. "Does it not miss an important element in how people actually think and act? Isn't a *story* involved in how we make the decisions of belief and behaviour that constitute our lives? Would it be better to consider a worldview as the *story* we live by?" He argues that the Christian worldview begins with ontology which becomes story that is reflected in the Bible. "Indeed, the Bible is story – a history. It is these narratives that transmit the worldview."

He then goes on (2004: 122, 133-5) to posit a revised definition of worldview in two parts:



### Part 1: (basic ontological definition)

A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.

### Part 2: (the fundamental questions)

[These cover foundational issues of ontology, epistemology and ethics. First presented in *The Universe Next Door* (1976), he stands by the original set, although he acknowledges that some would object to his exclusion of the aesthetics dimension.] The seven questions are:

1. What is prime reality – the really real?
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?
3. What is a human being?
4. What happens to a person at death?
5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right and wrong?
7. What is the meaning of human history?

While other worldview scholars may present the concept differently, I am persuaded nevertheless, that behind the definitions, there are necessary questions. At the same time, I remain unconvinced that Sire's particular set of questions are the main – or only – ones. This, of course, is a Western approach to worldview, but is still broad enough to accommodate minor approaches. Some worldviews may require additional questions.

Later, however, Sire acknowledges that worldview is culturally shaped and multidimensional. He notes (2004: 153) that worldview is two-dimensional in that it applies to both the individual (that is, private, narrow, specific) as well as the group (public, broader, vaguer). He recognises his approach is Western, having delineated seven worldviews: Christian theism, deism, naturalism, nihilism, existentialism, Eastern pantheistic monism, the New Age and postmodernism existing in North America and Western Europe. Then he continues (2004: 161): "But I do want to emphasise that these broad strokes both miss the finer points of our individual worldviews and somewhat misrepresent any one person's worldview. Even the way I have described the Christian worldview may constitute only my version of that worldview." Although he admits to not having considered the Islamic worldview – while pointing out its growing importance – perhaps it is unfortunate that he has not made any attempt, yet, to consider typical black African worldviews either.

As a contrast, Noebel (1991: 8) in his expansive work contrasting three major worldviews (Christian, Marxist/Leninist and Secular) suggests that worldview refers to

any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement or religion that provides an overarching approach to understanding God, the world, and man's relations to



God and the world. Specifically, a worldview should contain a particular perspective regarding each of the following ten disciplines: theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, law, politics, economics and history. [These distinctions are arbitrary since it is often difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish where to draw the lines differentiating them.]

As he acknowledges, these criteria are arbitrary and not everyone would see them as having significance. Like Sire, though, he is coming from a Christian perspective and, hence, he sees man's relation to God (and, thus, the concept of theology) as foundational. Some might argue that the dimensions of law, politics and economics, likewise, should not be delineated since they arise from the social interactions of the group. Nevertheless, they provide a useful grid with which to examine one's belief and value systems. Unfortunately, again, Noebel writes from a Western perspective and does not thus address the specifics of an African worldview. (To be fair, that was not his intention in the first place; he has presented a grid and compared and contrasted three selected worldviews.)

Nash (1992: 26-30) simplifies the defining process, suggesting that every worldview encompasses five key dynamics, namely a sense of God [or, in broader terms, religion], ultimate reality, knowledge, ethics and humankind. At the same time, he stresses (1992: 32) that, even though there may be disagreements among followers or critics of a given worldview as to the details, these basic categories still apply in principle.

Indeed, commenting on these disagreements, he points out (1992: 33) that:

Whether we know it or not – whether we like it or not – each of us has a worldview. These worldviews function as interpretive conceptual schemes to explain why we 'see' the world as we do, why we often think and act as we do. Competing worldviews often come into conflict. These clashes may be as innocuous as a simple argument between people or as serious as a war between nations. It is important, therefore, for us to understand that competing worldviews are the fundamental cause of our disagreements.

This observation supports the current study which has illustrated the potential for – and, indeed, actual – conflict even in a field as prosaic as administration. Frustration with apparent disorganisation, a lack of time management, varying philosophies of leadership and, even, a fist-fight over fuel all add credence to this principle.

While these opinions provide a base for understanding worldview in general terms, however, our concern here is more specifically an African approach and, in particular, the Shona and Ndebele worldviews. But to understand those, we should first explain the backgrounds to the development of these two ethnic groups as far as Zimbabwe is concerned.

### 1.2 The Shona and Ndebele Perspectives



In broad terms, both ethnic groups have their roots in the Southern African development of the Bantu peoples who have emerged from the migrations southwards down the continent of Africa from about the Second to the Eighth Centuries. This means there are some fundamental similarities in worldview and culture, as well as obvious differences. A brief history of each will bring to the fore key elements of their respective worldviews.

### 1.2.1 The Shona Peoples

The Shona peoples make up the largest ethnic group in Zimbabwe. According to Mazikana and Johnstone (1982: 22-23), the ancestors of the modern Shona arrived in the plateau area of what is now Zimbabwe some time during the iron-age of the Second and Third Centuries. They settled in the northern, eastern and southern parts of modern Zimbabwe, spilling over into neighbouring Zambia and Mozambique. They displaced earlier groups of Khoisan (stone-age, hunter/gatherers) and pushed them westwards.

They were pastoral, subsistence farmers with cattle, sheep and goats who, with their iron implements, also engaged in surface mining. Other groups continued to arrive and migrate across the Limpopo. After some time, some of these trekked north again, arriving in the south of the country during the Tenth Century. As these eclectic groups mixed, trade in gold, copper, ivory, cloth and beads flourished, both internally and with others from the east and north. During the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, a state system was formed, headquartered at Great Zimbabwe (from *Dzimbahwe* = house of stone) a large social and religious centre near modern-day Masvingo that eventually became the economic hub of the region in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. After approximately 400 years, it seems to have been abandoned probably because the area could not sustain the growing population. There appears to have been a movement west to Khami, near present-day Bulawayo, as part of the Torwa state where similar stone ruins exist.

As this 'exit' migration took effect, the groups in the north, under the growing dynasty of Mutapa, began to assert greater authority. By the early 1420s, they had merged into a state under this dynasty (Mazikana and Johnstone 1982: 38). With the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, trade with the Muslims declined and, with an oppressive, exploitative colonial approach, hostility grew. Another rising dynasty, the Changamire in the south-east, joined forces with the Mutapa in open revolt in 1693. Although independence was restored, commercial activity continued to decline and the Changamire state disappeared altogether. Eventually, too, the Mutapa dynasty collapsed and the successors became mere chiefs.

Mazikana and Johnstone (1982: 43) describe life in the Mutapa state of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century as similar to that of the 19<sup>th</sup>, *viz.*



The richer men had many wives ... the presence of dead kings and other leaders was maintained through spirit mediums; certain days of each month were set apart as holidays or *mudzimu* (spirit) days with feasting in honour of the ancestors; people carried *hakata* or divining bones or sticks and threw them for guidance in making decisions.... The Mutapa himself had a large court consisting of his family, counsellors, military leaders, officials of state, spiritual leaders and healers, and servants. Visitors would also be present: bringers of taxes and tributes from subjects and neighbouring people; Muslim African traders; Portuguese traders, missionaries and officials. At ceremonial occasions, sub-rulers would also attend. As for the military system of the state, there was a small permanent army. In times of emergency, thousands of men could be mobilised.

These background details help us to appreciate some dynamics of Shona culture and worldview in general. They briefly demonstrate that administration principles were understood and practised extensively so that this entire system could be maintained and be the influence that it was. But we should also mention some specific details. For example, Gelfand (1973: 101-109) speaks of the “teleology” of Shona culture, that is its end purpose or underlying objective. Simply, he says, this is to survive. He points out that the Shona have done so for millennia and this approach to life has allowed them to overcome the vagaries of change and calamity they have faced. He stresses that this teleology is subconscious, but can be observed in myriad ways. He emphasises that it is not the highest common multiple or lowest common denominator of the desire of any number of Shona individuals. He explains (1973: 101): “... there is in Shona culture something stronger than any individual or any number of individuals to which individual likes and dislikes have been subordinated.” He continues (1973: 102-3):

The imperatives of Shona culture might perhaps be reduced to three basic guidelines: ‘live together’, ‘keep the peace’ and ‘multiply.’ These guidelines reach out into every department of Shona life and they find themselves re-echoed and reinforced in that other all-pervading element of Shona culture, that is the familial monotheism of traditional Shona religion. ... [T]en centuries ago, man stood at bay. But even then, if men united to defend themselves against a hostile environment, safety would be an illusion if the community were a divided one. And even then, if men lived together and at peace with themselves, what hope would there be for the survival of the older generation if they did not have a younger generation to take over from them the defence of society against the hostile environment? In the case of the Shona, survival demanded that even the dead should not pass away completely but that they should continue their service to the community as the spirit members of community made up the living and the dead.

This ‘survival instinct’ expressed through the concepts, on the one hand, of harmony and, on the other, of eschewing conflict in any form, illustrates the cultural emphasis on relationships and the way(s) people are treated. The *person* becomes central. Thus, from an



administrative point of view, time – an abstract concept to begin with – and its concomitant of punctuality, for instance, is much less important than the event where people are present and 'I' can interact. The fact of being there is the issue, not of being 'late'.

Likewise, 'keeping the peace' explains the tendency to approach tension or conflict situations, most commonly by keeping quiet for minor infractions, but also seen through the use of mediators for major breaches. It also helps to explain the failure to correct or discipline another correctly in a 'working' environment. (This is not to say there is not a culture of discipline; there must be for any society to survive, and certainly children and family members are rebuked when needed. The point here is the apparent reluctance to take action in the face of failure, misconduct or loss of control on the basis that the relationship may sour, but without seeming regard for the welfare of the whole – which may well involve even more relationships.)

Much like the fish that cannot define water because that is what it is used to, so the average Shona person is typically unaware of these underlying dimensions that breed assumptions and presuppositions and which lead to what are understood to be logical, 'obvious' practices. Hence, the difficulty my co-researchers had in not being able to verbalise the reasons for doing some things and not doing others.

As with all sub-Saharan African worldviews, the Shona and Ndebele function very much around their religious life. Indeed, nothing of significance happens without some link to traditional religion; everything, eventually, has a spiritual cause. Thus, the worldview components of cosmology and religion are critical.

Gelfand explains (1973: 110) that, while there are several names of God, there are two that are used most commonly: *Mwari* = 'The Great One' and *Musikavanhu* = "The Creator of the People". A less common name is *Mutangakugara* = "The One who existed from the beginning." For many Christians, the former has been adopted as the equivalent of Jehovah – and is often used in translations unless the meaning is more specific – and they see little difference between the two; however there is some theological debate as to whether they constitute an exact match or not.

*Mwari*, as the One who made everything, both good and bad, thus can bring happiness or disaster. He is above everything and everyone and cannot be communicated with directly except through the mediators – hence the mediums, spirits and hierarchy of ancestors. One cannot really argue or reason with the Great Spirit. The family spirits – *vadzimu* – are more intimately concerned with the living as their descendants. Since it is not acceptable to



approach an important person – such as your father – except through an intermediary, there must be such a one for God.

The *vadzimu* (sing. *mudzimu*) maintain links with their dead relatives through the spirit of the grandfather and protect the interests of their living descendants (Gelfand, 1973: 114). In times of sickness, calamity or death, the *vadzimu* are consulted to see which of the spirits has caused the family to lose protective power and allow evil to enter their homes. In this system, the living and the dead are still all one family. But not everyone can pray to the *mudzimu*: the head of the group must pay respects on behalf of the family when any member is in trouble and ask the reason. Everyone is present in the hut for this ceremony and thus knows when the answer is given; there are no skeletons in the cupboard! This develops unity: as the parents care for the children, so the spirits care for the parents and will continue to do so when the children become parents themselves. It also means that prayer, rather than being personal, is a family affair.

The father and mother of the family both have four *vadzimu*: the spirits of their dead father, mother, grandfather and grandmother (Gelfand, 1973: 116). Any of these may become angry and punish the guilty. “In other words, the Shona must always have their dead in mind and no-one will doubt the findings of a *n’anga* (diviner) that the illness came simply because the guilty person had failed in some way to respect a spirit elder. The ritual also instils into every person a sense of discipline and obedience. On no account must anyone refuse to carry out the requirements of the ritual for, by omitting it, the dead will be angered ... If something wrong is done, everyone will know, so it is better to obey” (Gelfand, 1973: 117). But the *vadzimu* are not concerned with every omission or asocial act perpetrated by one person against another. Their anger is limited only to certain acts which are bound up in the religious practices of the people. If it is a matter of survival, then it is a concern of the *vadzimu*. (Gelfand, 1973: 118)

It is taboo to disregard or forget your *vadzimu*, and no request or demand by them, however small, can be disobeyed. (Gelfand, 1973: 119-120) The *vadzimu* are concerned about several aspects of life: (1) The provision by the family of bride wealth (*lobola/roora*); (2) The female *vadzimu* on the mother’s side will be angered should her husband or any of his sons kill the beast given (*mombe youmai*) by the son-in-law on marriage; (3) The *vadzimu* will be annoyed if, after a married man’s death, his family does not hold the ceremony of *kurova guva* in honour of the spirit of the dead man which is brought from the grave to be settled in the village; (4) The *vadzimu* will be angered if a person is not accorded a proper burial; (5) If a man marries a woman with the same totem, the most serious offence of *makunakuna* (incest)



is created; (6) If a man leaves his village without informing the *mudzimu*, the offended spirit may demand his return so as not to weaken or break up the family unit; (7) Should a wife die leaving young children, the spirit elder may be concerned and want her father to replace her with one of her sisters; (8) No-one should go to a vacant site (*dongo*) where a family once lived and now the *vadzimu* still hover. They are not to disturb the peace in the area in any way so as not to upset the spirit world.

While the Shona say no-one is forgotten or lost, typically only the ancestors of two or three generations, those in living memory, are remembered by name in prayers and rituals (Gelfand, 1973: 120.) Ultimately, says Gelfand (1973: 121) a person owes everything to his *mudzimu*.

There is no doubt that a person owes his *unhu* (personality) to his *vadzimu*. His behaviour, his consideration for others and his honesty are derived from his *mudzimu*. Equally ... a person owes his safety and protection entirely to his *vadzimu*. If their protection is removed for any reason, he may suffer any kind of illness, accident, tragedy or even death. Thus if a person is accidentally injured through no fault of his own, or if someone steals from him, he should see his *n'anga* to determine whether his *vadzimu* are not annoyed or want some form of offering. ... His *vadzimu* are not annoyed or concerned at the evil action of someone outside the family, only with the wrong doing of their own kin.

Generally, the *vadzimu* are seen as positive or good spirits. But there is a negative side too. Gelfand explains (1973: 122): “Should a *mudzimu* become angered or seek revenge, operating even outside its family circle to achieve its object, it becomes known as *ngozi*.” One example of this is the spirit of a murdered man – whether intentional or not. He will seek revenge for the death from the family responsible. An *ngozi* may also arise when a man, employed by another, is not given his due and dies without being paid. His spirit returns to punish the guilty man until his family meets his debt. *Ngozi* may also emerge when a son or daughter scolds or beats a parent and when the parent dies, the spirit will seek revenge. In the former two offences, the *ngozi* will kill; in the latter, only illness occurs.

While the *mudzimu* is the personal spirit of the nuclear family, the clan or extended family is looked after by the *mhondoro*. This is the spirit of the founder of the clan (Gelfand, 1973: 112). All the descendants related to the founder share a common *mutupo* or totem, a special, sacrosanct ‘label’ of identification; thus, all of them are brothers or sisters. Hence, “everyone has to help one another where they can and they all stand or fall together. Each becomes dependant on the other” (Gelfand, 1973: 114). From this arises exogamy, by which no clansman may marry a woman with the same totem.



Another key worldview dynamic relates to leadership and governance. In Shona culture, this is reflected through the institution of the chieftainship. Bourdillon (1987: 111-112), in outlining the role of the Shona chief, says:

The chief is traditionally guardian of the values of *rupenyu* (life) and *simba* (strength, well being). Life comes from the land, of which the chief is the ‘owner’ and strength or power comes from the chief’s status and his accession rituals. ... The chief is responsible for the prosperity of his people and particularly for the land and its produce. Thus drought may be blamed on the incompetence of the chief or on the fact that the wrong person was appointed. Until 1981 [that is, the year after Zimbabwe’s independence] ... the most significant task of the chief was to preside over his court ... [he] was not so much a judge as a chairman or president of his court. When a case was being tried, any man present who felt he had anything to say on the matter had a right to express his opinions. ... In any case, the ideal of the Shona courts is reconciliation rather than the imposition of a judgement, so that the successful conclusion of a case depends more on the disputing parties and the pressure put on them by the acquaintances than on a decision of the chief officer, whose role is primarily to guide and assess the proceedings.

It is evident from this that the chief is seen as a custodian of resources – both the land and the people – and has a responsibility to govern in such a way that these are protected and utilised harmoniously. We see again, too, that relationships are primary. Notably, this may help to partly explain why it is evident in many Pentecostal and independent churches that the pastor (especially, if there is more than one, the senior pastor) both does and is expected to “rule”, as it were, for the benefit of the people. Hence, the underlying dynamic of a “benign dictatorship”. This not only gives enormous power but the resultant expectations make servant leadership very difficult too. (This will be explored further in the next chapter on the theology of administration and, in particular, leadership.) Indeed, Bourdillon (1987: 115) continues:

A weak personality would not be highly respected as a chief, nor would a financially poor man. Persons have occasionally been turned out of a chiefship because they could not meet the expenses demanded of them for rituals, hospitality and generosity associated with the chiefship. On the other hand, a domineering chief is also disliked and quickly loses respect and influence, as would a wealthy yet close chief. A chief should be authoritative and firm, but he should speak with the voice of his people and act for the good of his people.

This appears to fit well with many independent pastors who rule over their ministry “kingdom” and fits naturally with a materialistic mind-set in the face of searing poverty. After all, the position demands it; God must bless me. Even if the underlying worldview factor is not consciously evident, it is difficult to argue against someone who relies on what they understand God to have told them and their theological concept and resultant expectations of the role of the pastor. This is especially so if that person is the founder.



Another interesting dimension is the connection between the chief and the spirit world. In Shona culture, says Bourdillon (1987: 116):

... the founding ancestors of many chiefly dynasties are said to have obtained their positions through knowledge of 'medicines'; that the founding ancestors of chiefly dynasties are usually the spirits believed to control the productivity of the chiefdom; that the ruling chiefs are successors to these founding ancestors and must have their approval and protection; that the chief's political power arises from the religious power of his ancestors. From all this arises the role of the chief to mediate between his people and the spirit guardians of the chiefdom. Thus in time of drought or when pests threaten crops in a chiefdom, it is the responsibility of the chief to arrange for a consultation with the medium of the senior spirit guardian and to organise appropriate rituals. Some people say that no one should approach a senior medium on a public matter without first consulting the chief; in any séance the chief has a place of honour beside the possessed mediums and the senior spirit mediums generally take an interest in the private affairs of the chief's family. ... The traditional chief is thus a religious as well as a political ruler.

Here, again, the underlying concept can be translated very easily to a church or ministry context, allowing the 'pastor-chief' to assume his status because he has an extra measure of spirituality, hears from God more clearly or frequently (because he is "the man of God") and thus must mediate between his people and God. He and the Holy Spirit have a special 'connection'. At the same time, Bourdillon points out (1987: 117) that the precise nature of the relationship between the chief and the spirit guardians of the land varies and depends partly on the traditional history of the particular chiefdom.

So, in the context of church or ministry, one's perception and expectation of a chief's role may also vary and, hence, the way this dynamic is subconsciously drawn upon in leadership style may also vary. Thus, for instance, one pastor may be the "chief" of all he surveys, while another pastor may see himself as one of the elders, albeit a slight step above (because of title and position).

These dynamics of Shona life – their historical and agrarian roots, the focus on relations, the centrality of the spirit world and governance through the chieftainship – shed light on several of the factors already exposed in the attitudes, responses to and praxis of administration we have explored so far.

Most of these observations, however, have their roots in the rural setting. Yet, we noticed (Chapters Two to Five) that a major point of tension in modern administration for our participants is the result of the differences in lifestyle between the rural and urban contexts. This was most acute in terms of attitudes toward and use of time and the approach to planning. That rural and urban lifestyles are worlds apart is not surprising; what is not always



appreciated are the cultural tensions arising from the demands of urban life which militate against the habits, customs, desires and even fears based on cultural practices and a worldview that is basically rural in outlook.

To sharpen these differences, we now have a situation where perhaps up to four generations – great-grandfather, grand-father, father and son – were all born in the city and, with each succeeding generation, the connection with the rural lifestyle, culture and worldview has become ever more distant. Indeed, it is not uncommon to find even older children who believe that milk comes from a plastic packet; they have never seen a live cow! Young adults were told as they were growing up that their African identity comes from their rural roots – yet they have never visited their great-grandfather’s village and have very little idea of that worldview. So, what is “traditional” now? Indeed, what does it mean to be African? Naturally, this forces a change in worldview and, with it, the presuppositions, expectations and practices of a wide range of living dynamics. This includes, of course, one’s approach to administration. Thus, several of my co-researchers, being urbanites, had difficulty discussing the rural worldview in detail because, other than infrequent visits usually for ministry, they now have little appreciation of the deeper things of rural life.

To illustrate, Bourdillon (1987: 318) in noting some of these changes comments on a survey as early as 1979:

Many urban families try to overcome this problem [the widening gap between urban parents and their children because of the absence of key relatives] by sending their children to stay with rural kin for a while. [In the survey of one secondary school in Harare], all of the 103 children interviewed had been brought up in the urban areas; yet ninety per cent of the girls and eighty-two per cent of the boys had spent some time staying with a grandmother in the rural areas, and the majority said that they had been taught their manners by grandmothers and fathers’ sisters (*vatete*). But this education serves only to further hide the growing divergence between the traditional ideas of kinship to which nearly all Shona give at least notional assent, and the new patterns of relationships necessitated by urban life.

Not surprisingly, 25 years on, the resultant social problems are more manifest now with an even wider generational gap and, increasingly, the complaint is heard that “our culture is breaking down.” The social changes brought by urbanisation and technology are perceived, rightly or wrongly, as removing or reducing what is considered ‘culture’. Of course, these changes are not limited to the Shona alone. Nor does this intermixing of cultures – typified by the concept of the global village – actually result in a lessening of one’s culture or sense of being. All cultures are dynamic and adjust as they come into contact with others. But, it cannot be gainsaid that European colonialism has negatively impacted African cultures. All



ethnic groups across the African continent have been affected, both positively and negatively. Indeed, European politics has had massive social implications, the biggest, arguably, being urbanisation. We see here, then, the clash of two worlds.

In discussing some of the resultant problems facing urban Christians, O'Donovan (2000: 21) helpfully summarises the basic contrasts between African and Western cultural values:

<b><u>African Culture</u></b>	<b><u>Western Culture</u></b>
1. Strong community values (group participation, group decision)	1. Strong individualistic values (individual initiative, decisions)
2. Community identity	2. Individual identity
3. Community living style	3. Private living style
4. Extended family emphasis	4. Immediate family emphasis
5. Wholistic approach to life	5. Categorical approach to life
6. Importance of the event	6. Importance of schedules & clock time
7. People-oriented priorities	7. Task- and goal-oriented priorities
8. Real-life (situational) thinking	8. Abstract and academic thinking
9. Preference for real-life learning	9. Preference for academic thinking
10. Spiritual worldview	10. Scientific worldview
11. Emphasis on spoken communication	11. Emphasis on written communication
12. Emphasis on spoken agreements based on relationships with people	12. Emphasis on written agreements based on policies by committees
13. Respect for the elderly	13. Respect for the educated
14. Traditional inherited leadership	14. Elected (democratic) leadership
15. Death is passing into the spirit world (survivors must perform rituals)	15. Death is a practical problem (survivors need counsel & support)
16. Resolve conflicts through mediator	16. Resolve conflicts face-to-face
17. Practical (ritual) response to spirit realities	17. Intellectual response to spirit realities
18. Practical (ritual) approach to religion	18. Intellectual approach to religion
19. Vulnerability seen as weakness	19. Vulnerability seen as a strength
20. Much interest in the spirit world	20. Little interest in the spirit world

It is clear from this comparison that there are fundamental disparities between the two. Moreover, even a cursory reflection will bring to the fore an appreciation of the clashes in terms of approaches to time, planning, organising, leading and controlling. It is, perhaps, in the context of the two worlds at odds in the city that the problems with administration as highlighted in earlier chapters should be viewed. It is not that one culture or worldview is right or wrong, but rather that the two tend to meet more noticeably in the urban arena. Obviously, administration is needed and exists in the rural setting – otherwise there would be chaos – but it is the clash of two worlds in the city where the distinctions are practically pronounced.

Since these are generalisations, the same is naturally true of the Ndebele too. And, although there are many broad similarities with the Shona, there are some key differences. As we now explore these, we begin with the historiography.

### 1.2.2 The AmaNdebele



The AmaNdebele are the second largest ethnic group in Zimbabwe. They are an off-shoot from the Zulu of South Africa. According to Omer-Cooper (1978: 146), this group of Ndebele under Prince Mzilikazi, son of Matshobana (a Zulu chief), fled from King Tshaka in Zululand in the 1820s due to internecine wars. Mzilikazi moved his kraal, Mosega, to the Transvaal, but this was destroyed in January 1837 by a joint operation of two Boer commandos, Potgieter and Maritz. In two separate groups, one travelling north-westerly and the other north-easterly, they then crossed the Limpopo River and settled in south-western Zimbabwe near the Matopos Hills. They expanded north-east up to the Sanyati River as far as Kwekwe and north-west to Wankie. (Mzilikazi himself took a group as far as the Zambezi River but turned back because of the scourge of the tsetse fly.)

All of the tribes Mzilikazi conquered on his way from Natal were incorporated into the Ndebele tribe. Following the Zulu tradition, one key element of Ndebele culture was their military organisation. Explains Omer-Cooper (1978: 134-135):

At the settlement in the central Transvaal the Ndebele state crystallised along the lines on which it was subsequently to develop. The regimental system of the Zulu was retained, each regiment being accommodated in a special military settlement under the command of an *induna*. As in the case of the Zulu, each of these military towns was regarded as a section of the royal household and contained some of Mzilikazi's wives. In the case of the Ndebele, however, the army and the civilian population could not be distinguished from one another. The whole group were immigrants living by force of arms in an alien country. There was thus no hierarchy of territorial chiefs separate from that of the military *indunas*. The regimental headquarters constituted the territorial divisions of the tribe as a whole.

(These *impis* or soldiers would raid into other territories, taking women and cattle and devastating crops. The Shona were affected up to the Shamva River, north of Harare, and perhaps, beyond. This is the substance of historical acrimony between the ethnic groups, although inter-marriage has been fairly common for many years. This acrimony is not overt now, but manifested itself during the pre-independence liberation struggle and during the 1982/3 *Gukuruhundi* (Shona = sift the chaff) massacres in Matabeleland; today, it is seen in political positioning, employment and, even, socially through jokes. In public, the underlying tensions are politely ignored; in private, there are varying degrees of animosity.)

Omer-Cooper (1978: 147-148) says that, while Mzilikazi was away on the Zambezi, some *indunas* decided to appoint Nkulumane, his elder son and intended successor, as king. But Mzilikazi rushed back and executed the leaders of this supposed rebellion. Nkulumane, having been sent to South Africa, had subsequently disappeared (and probably executed) while Lobengula, his half-brother by a minor wife, was protected from punishment and later reconciled to his father. Mzilikazi died in 1868 and Lobengula succeeded him as King in



January 1870, aged 34, after putting down some continued resistance. The *Encyclopedia Zimbabwe* (Sayce, 1987: 280) states that “the central point of the Ndebele kingdom was then established at what is now Bulawayo [*GuBulawayo* = ‘the place of slaughter’, so called because of the slaughter of those resisting Lobengula’s ascendancy to the kingship].

Lobengula razed Bulawayo in 1893 when the British South Africa Company (BSAC) forces attacked as part of the Anglo-Ndebele war, fought to establish sovereignty over land and mineral rights; he fled toward the Zambezi River and died, reportedly of smallpox, near Kamativi the following February.

Culturally, the Ndebele, as an off-shoot of the Zulu, were militarily inclined and saw cattle as the main economic and pastoral commodity. Mazikana and Johnstone (1982: 70-71) explain that,

A number of towns, called *amabutho* developed from bases of the ‘regimental’ age groups that were a feature of the Ndebele social and military system. The *amabutho* served as centres of military districts. They, and the ordinary villages and towns, each had chiefs and advisors concerned with political, social, judicial, spiritual and other administrative roles, as well as military responsibilities. In every respect (though in degrees differing according to time, place and circumstance) these roles were carried out in accordance with the central authority of the state at GuBulawayo. At every level, including that of trade and commerce, inter-relationships and inter-dependencies existed between the various towns, districts and people of the state. The unity of this whole organism was emphasised at the annual *iNxwala* [a major annual festival at the beginning of the rainy season or New Year; it sought to highlight agricultural rejuvenation, spiritual purification as well as social loyalty and unity]. Outside the central area of the state existed tributary communities which were not integrated into the Ndebele state or way of life. Their peaceful relationship with the state depended upon their recognition of its ultimate authority, and upon the provision of men, services and materials when called upon to do so.

Regarding the *iNxwala*, Bozongwana (1983: 44-46) stresses its significance, pointing out that approximately one month before the main festival, the chiefs, kraalheads and military commanders would meet with the King to discuss social and economic matters affecting the realm. Domestic policy would be spelled out and customs and other requirements reiterated. Chiefs and kraalheads would be appointed or demoted; security issues debated and plagues, illnesses or other phenomena reviewed. The main ceremony itself (*iNxwala enkulu*) would be notified to the King by the high priest keeping a record of the lunar calendar. After recording 13 notches on a stick, the year was declared at an end and the New Year celebration should be held as soon as possible. “Streams of women carrying calabashes of beer on their heads travelled miles and miles to the royal kraal. Accompanied by their grown-up girls, roads leading to the royal kraal were filled with rushing men, women and girls all in their best attire.



Men drove cattle to be slaughtered at the King's kraal. There were so many of them that the dust caused by their movement covered the sun." The high priest, as Master of Ceremonies, would begin the festival with a long whistle, after which he led in singing the national chant, *ingoma yeNxwala*, which was sung only once a year. The most sacred part of the festival – the *umthontiso* ritual – involved the whole tribe as it attempted to purify and unite itself [in the] national spirit. Milk from black cows was mixed with other herbs and people took some of this to strengthen and purify themselves. The King was the first to partake and the high priest invoked the spirits as he treated the King. "The oracle in which the life of the tribe lay was a medium sized calabash with a small neck and with it was an ostrich egg, porcupine quills and many other things around it. The whole tribe sang and danced in joy. The music was often interrupted by a call for silence while the high priest spoke and praised the King's ancestral spirits and pleading that they bless the realm particularly the King so that he triumphs over the enemy. The priest recited the spells over the oracle as if the ancestors actually lived in it. Regiments assembled and displayed their fighting skills as people watched silently. They made mock attacks as the King watched in amusement." As part of the festival, young maidens prepared themselves and were paraded past the King who would choose his next bride. Whoever won was taken to the royal kraal for training and stayed in an area reserved for queens. At the end of the celebrations, the high priest closed the *iNxwala* and people went back to their homes.

It is clear from this that, administratively speaking, the Ndebele were more cohesive and centralised than the Shona, which have several subdivisions. However, although the Shona do not have a king, nor do they have one unifying spectacle, the similarities between "kingly administration" (that is, one overall leader) and "chiefly administration" (a single leader in a given area) would be very analogous.

Like their Shona counterparts, the cosmology of the Ndebele is a central factor in their worldview and culture. Bozongwana (1983: 32-41) describes two spirit entities: *idlozi elihle* (good spirit) and *idlozi elibe* (bad spirit). These two fight against each other. "Sometimes," says Bozongwana, "a spirit is baptised into the host by the parents while at [other] times the ancestor spirit forces itself into the host." He adds that, "their activity in the host is marked by disturbances so that the host becomes aware of what the intention of the spirit is. The host normally acts under instruction backed by force. Sometimes the disturbance occurs in the head, while at [other] times it takes place in the body causing it to quiver or shake violently. The victim may speak the language of the indwelling spirit while he or she is in a trance, and may have supernatural power and perform wonders."



He goes on to say that the chief work of the *inyanga* (good spirit) is to “heal the sick, bring good luck, protect and drive away the evil spirits which cause suffering and death. This kind of spirit is often hereditary, although at times one acquires it through invocation, that is, an experienced witchdoctor by using charms, will summon a friendly spirit to make use of the applicant as host.”

At the same time, he says there is also the “violent good spirit”. This is the *isangoma* (male) and *isanuse* (female). “This is a witch-hunting spirit dreaded by wizards and witches. Sick people consult it to see who is harming them. [Only] good singing and dancing by a crowd will lure the spirit to come and speak through the host.” This spirit, Bozongwana adds, reveals its presence shortly before or after puberty, but seldom after marriage. The *isangoma* is both a doctor and a fortune-teller. The designation is seen in the vestments: “he has to fight and kill an eagle, vulture and a python for bones which comprise his robe and girdle.”

Evil or witch spirits, continues Bozongwana (1983: 36-40), are mostly said to be found in women. They are believed to possess supernatural powers at night and can enter locked doors and interfere with the sleeping person in an effort to make them sick or ill. The presence of these spirits in the home is often linked with disturbances or sounds or movements on the roof or ceiling. There is the smashing or dashing of things to the floor, disturbing sleep and causing panic and confusion in the house. Sometimes these spirits take the form of an animal such as a hare, snake, bird or baboon to disguise themselves, and these are known as familiar spirits (*imikhoba*, *izinto* or *izituhwane*). Witches will often ride on ant-bears or hyenas at night to get human flesh and blood.

Again, like the Shona, the Ndebele have their herbalists and fortune tellers. These, typically, are not spirit-possessed. Bozongwana (1983: 41) calls these ‘bone-throwers’ or *izinyanga* “a class of dishonest people or swindlers” who acquire bogus knowledge in the use of medicines and herbs. He relates how three of them declared his father dead but had not been brought home, so his spirit was causing sickness in the family – yet his father was still alive! Although this may have been the case here, I think there are many Shona and Ndebele who would dispute this and swear blind that the *n’anga* or *inyanga* has been absolutely correct every time and that the troubles have been cured as a result of following the instructions. Belief in the system is so pervasive and strong that the existence of some cheats will not diminish the overall “faith” in them!

The cosmological and religious components of the Shona and Ndebele worldviews do not seem, at first glance, to have any direct bearing on the practice of administration. However, this may be because people do not typically associate spirit activity with administrative



dynamics and, therefore, do not – or perhaps, cannot – articulate such a connection. Yet, given the pervasiveness of spirit activity and the assumptions about the spirit world in everyday life, it is difficult to avoid concluding that the influence is there, albeit unrecognised. In my conversations with my co-researchers, questions along this line met with limited or tangential recognition. Still, the desire for positive relationships and the fear of the negative – both of which the spirit world influences – must have at least some indirect impact on such factors as planning and controlling.

In broad terms, despite their differing roots and routes in their histories, the worldviews of the Shona and Ndebele have a large degree of overlap and many complementarities. Both groups, for example, practise ancestral veneration; they see God (Shona = *Mwari*; Ndebele = *Nkulunkulu*) as distant and approachable only for major circumstances – and then only through the mediums of their spirits and ancestors as mediators. Both are very relational, event oriented and concerned with the spirit world. Both are pastoral, with the Shona focusing their agricultural efforts on crops, chiefly maize in the more fertile north and east of Zimbabwe, while the Ndebele understand their livelihood in terms of cattle. (The drier climes of southwestern Zimbabwe, bordering on the edges of the Kalahari Desert of Botswana, are not suitable for cropping anyway.) These agricultural and social differences, together with a general personality outlook – the Shona tend to be rather placid while the Ndebele come from a militaristic background – also play a large part in the details of their cultures.

Having briefly examined the Shona and Ndebele backgrounds and some aspects of their worldviews, and as seen from our individual and group conversations, it is noteworthy that the differences in culture and worldview are not vastly significant. There are many similarities and this explains, therefore, why their approaches to administration are not conspicuously different. Indeed, the similarities between the two worldviews – albeit in broad terms – have allowed me to explore them as a common entity without being unduly concerned about or side-tracked by marked differentials that would otherwise require separate detailed inspection, analysis and comment.

### 1.2.3 *Ubuntu/unhu*: A Core Underlying Philosophy

But, to explain this broad “outlook on reality” a little further, it may be helpful to explore one fundamental dimension, an underlying philosophy common to many sub-Saharan ethnic groups, not just the Shona or Ndebele. This is referred to as *ubuntu* or *unhu* (see also reference to this in Chapter Five). Kapolyo (2005: 35-36), in outlining the humanity, for instance, of this concept points to the centrality of the person: “God, although clearly acknowledged as the Creator, is nevertheless not the centre of creation. Human beings fill the



pride of place and God is imported, as it were, to explain the origins of *abantu* (people).” Mbiti (1969: 92) puts it lucidly: “it is as if God exists for the sake of man.” Yet, comments Kapolyo (2005: 35), while there is acceptance of a rift between God and man, “there is, however, a conspicuous lack of even a hint of a reversal of the tragedy of the separation between God and his creatures. There is no hint of salvation or utopia in some distant future. Hence, says Mbiti (1969: 99), “This remains the most serious cul-de-sac in the otherwise rich thought and sensitive and religious feelings of our peoples. It is perhaps here, then, that we find the greatest weakness and poverty of our traditional religions compared to world religions like Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism.”

A human being, explains Kapolyo (2005: 36), is body, life and spirit. Thus, he

possesses *ubumi* – strength, vitality or life force. This life force is more than just brute force; it is a sharing in the creative nature of God and therefore has the ability to originate things, to dominate the lower creation and to influence causes, not in the same way that God creates, dominates and influences but in a derivative sense as befits one created by a higher and fuller force. Human beings are able to both grow and diminish in their possession of this vital force, and therefore, to become more human through procreation and especially accession either to chieftainship or to any of the special functionaries who stand between human life and the world of the spirits.

With *ubuntu*, says Kapolyo (2005: 39), one who is authentically or truly human is caring, humble, thoughtful, considerate, understanding, wise, godly, generous, hospitable, mature, virtuous and blessed. “The over-riding quality is virtue, which is defined as the practice of giving of oneself to the promotion of the good of the community. All these virtues or values, except the last one, ‘blessed’, are oriented towards others.”

As we pointed out in Chapter Five and is evident from the above, *ubuntu/unhu* has implications for the practice of administration. But how? To demonstrate both the subconscious and conscious kinds of linkages, I would like to refer to Mbigi. He has taken *ubuntu/unhu* and, in addition to explaining it, suggests, interestingly, how it can be harnessed to transform the modern management environment in Southern Africa. He notes (1995: 4) that “Africa’s achievements and genius do not lie in technology but in **social** and **spiritual** spheres. ... Social innovation, of which the crafting of relevant organisational collective rituals and ceremonies is an important dimension, has to be brought to the centre of organisational transformation and renewal in Africa.”

He points out (1995: 1-2) that this is not uniquely a Shona or Ndebele philosophy; rather “it is a concept of brotherhood and collective unity for survival among the poor in every society. ... In essence, *ubuntu* is a universal concept that can be applicable to all poor communities.”



However, he then takes it out of the universal realm to emphasise the African sense of identity: “The cardinal belief of *Ubuntu* is that *a man can only be a man through others*. [This reflects the African worldview of self: ‘I am because we are.’] In its most fundamental sense it stands for personhood and morality. The key values of *Ubuntu* are: Group solidarity, conformity, compassion, respect, human dignity and collective unity.”

In the context of organisations and management, Mbigi’s underlying premise here is that,

unless the development structures, strategies and processes can harness these *Ubuntu* values into a dynamic transformative force for reconstruction and development, failure will be almost certain. For African organisations and companies the challenges of social and political innovation far exceed the technical challenges. Our suggestion is that we must harness the social experience and innovation of the African people and align them with successful management techniques from the West and the East. In essence this requires careful and creative strategic alignment by African managers. ... The most pervasive and fundamental collective experience of the African people is their religious experience. It is integrated into all aspects of their lives on a daily basis. It is therefore important that conceptual frameworks of powerful strategic ideas must try and make reference to the African religious and cultural experience if effective transfer and adaptation are to take place. (1995: 2-3)

His thesis is premised on four theories arising from *ubuntu*: (1) The Corpse Shadow Theory, which focuses on the need to burn the past before renewal and a new vision can occur; (2) The Nhorowondo Theory, which emphasises the need to appreciate the historical roots of any technique in order to adapt it successfully [for the future]; (3) The Collective Fingers Theory, which tries to emphasise the importance of collective education and rituals in order to manage change in Africa successfully; and (4) The Rainbow Spirits Theory (*Dembetembe*), which symbolically and metaphorically represents possible dominant cultural elements, values or dimensions in organisations.

Presenting the latter as a management model, named after the Rainmaker for the vaHera clan of which his grandmother served as a medium, he explains (1995: 18) that the Rainmaker, at the highest level of the spirit ‘structure’, “is the moral conscience of society in balancing justice and fairness. It is the checks and balances in tribal political systems. In times of political crisis the Rainmaker will rally the people and play a leading role in removing the corrupt ruler. [He/]she would interpret traumatic experiences and emerging realities.”

Mbigi’s endeavour here (1995: 19) is to capture “the spiritual symbolism of Afrocentric religion and use it as a dipstick for assessing corporate culture in organisations.” He goes on to explain (1995: 20):

The spirit in African religion is one’s total being or soul. It represents our inner self and our total being. The spirit is who we really are. It is our values and our



culture in terms of an organisation. It is the climate and values of that particular organisation. We are using the African spirit as a metaphor to describe certain prevailing or dominant values in particular organisations and situations.

He then outlines the value of each spirit in the context of organisational or corporate culture, suggesting that “for the positive spirit to be predominant, one needs to separate it from its negative counterpart in a cleansing ceremony. ... The issue is not to destroy the negative spirit but to marginalise it. In a corporate sense, one needs a corporate cleansing ceremony, in which one harnesses the positive spirits, through bonding, and marginalises the negative ones” (1995: 25-26).

### The “Dembetembe Model” of Management



THE CULTURAL VALUES	THE SPIRIT
Morality and dignity	Rainmaker (Gobwa)
Performance and enterprise	Hunter (Shavi Reudzimba)
Authority – know the truth	Divination (Sangoma/n'anga)
Power and conflict	War (Mujikwa)
Survival of self & one's group	Clan Spirit (Mudzimu wemusha)
Particular obsession, ability & creativity	Wandering (Shave)
Bitterness, anger & revenge	Avenging (Ngozi)
Cynicism, negativity & destruction	Witch (Mutakati)

(Source: Mbigi, L. (1995) *Ubuntu: The spirit of African transformation management*, Knowledge Resources: Randburg. pp. 19- 20)

He then goes on to discuss how the spirit world and related cultural practices can be used as a model for corporate transformation. For instance, he speaks of the “corpse shadow theory”. This is the idea that you do not bury a dead body if it casts a shadow; the shadow signifies negative feelings such as guilt, bitterness or fear, which must be cleansed if the person is to



be transformed into a useful ancestral spirit. For organisations in Southern Africa to be transformed into dynamic, quality entities, he suggests, they need to come to grips with the dark side of their past. This is because, “in the Afrocentric religion, in order to know **what you can become** you must start by knowing **who you are**” (1995: 55). He says “the destiny of any particular organisation does not depend on budgets or strategic plans, but rather on how one harnesses the various self-organised **circles of influence** within that particular organisation.” In other words, it is the people and their interpersonal relationships that constitute an organisation’s greatest asset and its strongest tool for transformation.

Picking up on this in more detail in chapter four, where he responds to the competitive agenda issue (1995: 62), he says that, while the traditional definition of competitiveness revolves around productivity, market share, quality, cost and innovation,

there is dire need to broaden [this] to include **relations** and speed of delivery ... A world-class organisation has to improve both profitability and the social relationships of the workplace in such a way that the shop-floor workers can be motivated to produce quality products and services. The workers need to develop initiative and creativity, which is the tradition and spirit of the enterprising African village. There should be management systems and values that facilitate shop-floor “grass-roots” empowerment to canonise the values of respect and human dignity. This is the spirit and cornerstone of the grass-roots democracy of African traditional communities and societies.

In pointing out that modern business approaches and philosophies – Total Quality Management (TQM), Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) and Total Productive Maintenance (TPM) among others – have tended to fail in Southern Africa, he says the reason is the lack of contextualisation. This introduces the Nhorowondo theory. “In Afrocentric religion, no idea or situation can be transformed into reality unless there is a totally transformed human being driving it. This person is normally called a spirit medium. The Western equivalent for this is a champion or change agent” (1995: 73). The Nhorowondo theory, according to Shona culture, asserts that, in order to contextualise any concept or practice successfully, one must be prepared to trace its roots (1995: 75). Who were the key people behind the original idea and what was their agenda? Then we must “unpack only the elements of that particular practice that are appropriate and able to address our own problems. This should be done in a very creative way.” In recruiting the change agent he adds (1995: 79), we should focus on talent and passion, not education and experience.

Next, Mbigi uses *ubuntu* to create a human resources model. He argues (1995: 84-85) that, in the South African context prior to the democratic era, the human resources (HR) approach was purely administrative; since it was not perceived as adding value to the company, the visibility and status of the HR department was very low. Unfortunately, this approach did not



allow such staff to manage the changes in unionism – with the concomitant fears, polarities, mistrust and alienation – very well. This led to a reactive model, where the HR staff was expected to play a decisive, visible and, even, policing, role in industrial relations. This, in turn, has produced a “witchcraft” image in the eyes of management and a “sell-out” image in the eyes of the workers. In response, some HR practitioners have adapted to a business model, assisting management to achieve strategic business goals. But this has seen a loss of warmth and passion for long-term implementation and, consequently, has been hard for workers to accept. An alternative is the welfare model, where companies are expected to assist their employees with their social problems such as education and housing, as well as health and sporting services. Although this is positive, Mbigi says (1995: 86) it is isolated from the function of wealth creation and can also be abused by management to develop a dependency syndrome to exercise controlled exploitation of workers.

What he calls the development or *ubuntu* model (1995: 86-87) is premised on Africa’s developmental needs. “HR practitioners have an intellectual role in their companies: that of interpreting the emerging patterns of a chaotic environment, as well as generating new models or ideas to guide the organisation. The focus of [this] model is [w]holistic development. [It] focuses on continuous improvement and development of people, products, systems, structures, markets, productivity and quality as well as performance.” Under this model, he says (1995: 88), HR practitioners would be guided by four cardinal principles: Morality, Interdependence, Spirit of Man and Totality (MIST), all of which are based on the *ubuntu* idea of unconditional respect and dignity.

In outlining these, Mbigi says (1995: 88) morality is a critical issue since “no institution can attain its highest potential without touching its moral base.” This is why corruption, endemic in public institutions in Africa, tends to lose credibility. Interdependence avers that “the optimisation of wealth creation ... requires the collective co-operation of all stakeholders ... which can only be achieved by acknowledging [such] interdependence.” The spirit of man principle recognises that man is the creator and benefactor of all wealth creation. ... Man is the purpose of all organisations and they must work in harmony with him in the spirit of service.” (1995: 89) And lastly, there is the principle of totality. Wealth creation is complex and requires the attention and continuous improvement of everything in the organisation, by every member of the organisation. ... The building of a great organisation must start with little improvements ... in [the] five universal standards of relationships, quality, quantity, cost and timing. ... This is the essence of *ubuntu* – collective participation of every member through freedom of enterprise is a precondition to the creation of enterprising communities in Africa.



These five *ubuntu* principles can simultaneously affect the management issues of co-ordination, communication, competence, competitiveness and compassion.”

From there, Mbigi moves on (1995: 102-105) to discuss four other cultural dynamics in relation to training: Attitude to change, attitude to reward, attitude to team and attitude to change management. He says “the Afrocentric view [of change] is a belief in destiny [which] has helped to foster an adaptation to the dramatic aspects of change [in South Africa], which has been very beneficial.” (1995: 102) The *ubuntu* idea of rewards is that “one works for an additional reward so that one’s fellow man can enjoy the fruits of one’s labour. Whatever one earns is for the collective good of the community” (1995: 103). On teamwork, he notes (1995: 104) that, in the Afrocentric view, “one thinks in terms of collective survival. Group loyalty is the key issue in building a team.” In observing the American, European and Eastern attitudes to change management, Mbigi then contrasts them with the *ubuntu* outlook. “In Mother Africa,” he says (1995: 105), “focus on change efforts has to be [based on the] creation of harmony between the individual and his **community** as well as nature, particularly **ancestral spirits**. ... The question of **freedom of choice** for the individual is out; what is critical is **freedom from want**. It is also theoretical nonsense to expect individual self-reliance and independence. One survives by joining hands with others.”

In explaining the last of his four theories, Mbigi asserts (1995: 110) that traditional approaches to managing change involve training and development. He asks what the change agents, particularly human resource practitioners, should do in order to escalate the learning processes to match the daunting challenges of change, reconstruction and development in Africa. “The traditional African education practices focus on the following areas: collective ceremonies and rituals, story tellers, dancing and music as well as facilitation by an outsider, soothsayer and *sangoma*. The facilitator is always an outsider. In fact, there is a proverb from the African Shona tribe that a thumb, although it is strong, cannot kill aphids on its own. It would require the collective co-operation of the other fingers.” Thus, he introduces the Collective Fingers Theory. Using *ubuntu* as a model and the fingers as a symbol for collective development and reconstruction, Mbigi suggests five aspects (starting with the thumb): Respect, Dignity, Solidarity, Compassion and Survival. Each one needs the others. The implication for the organisation is the need “to harness the collective energy and support of key players in the organisation. It means that one needs to open collective forums, which are inclusive in nature and must, as much as possible, include everyone in the organisation.” (1995: 111) He then outlines five phases for this corporate training strategy. Phase One must include a residential (but off site) programme run by an external facilitator. It must not be factually oriented only but should critically include ritual and ceremony to initiate bonding.



Personal disclosure and stories by the facilitator are crucial. Phase Two involves a “*bosberaad*” (that is, a picnic or *braai* to discuss business issues) for all key players in the company. Again, ritual and ceremony are key to bonding, together with an external story teller. Phase Three should achieve critical mass with the inclusion of everyone in the organisation in inclusive strategic forums. Here, ceremony is even more important. This builds a shared will to survive. Phase Four helps the organisation to build capacity and skill. An unsuspecting, participative skills audit is needed. Once more, ceremony and ritual build trust and bonding. The fifth and last phase is training the trainees to be learners; they should “become self-empowered and authors of their own destiny so they can mobilise the resources and people around them to help them on their learning journey.” (1995: 114) In this phase, communication is critical. This should involve more than just relaying of facts. It should include “the extensive use of symbols, story telling, music and rituals. When an event happens, it must be accompanied by pomp and ceremony. Bring a choir when the company results are announced, or have a braai.” And he adds, “there must be one annual production, quality or world-class festival day to celebrate the achievement of the company.”

Mbigi’s final contribution in this exercise is to suggest how the African village is relevant for organisational design. He posits (1995: 117-118) that central to corporate change in Southern Africa is the new society and institutions being created. “One major problem causing change initiatives to fail in South Africa,” he observes, “is that they are undertaken with the unrealistic assumption that the organisational design in terms of structure, authority and relationships will remain untouched.” With the socio-political and socio-economic changes taking place in the region, organisational design is being challenged. “The organisational design that is emerging is something far removed from the known industrial organisation to a much more feudal style that can only be found in its original form in Africa.” He says new issues are now hotly debated: the need to create trust, multiple stakeholder accountability, group care and loyalty. There is also an emphasis on participation and inclusive structures and governance. “This is a clear testimony that the mechanical, scientific attempt to marginalise primitive human feelings and run organisations purely on rational logic has failed. Indeed, there is a clarion call for community creation in organisations, which is a call to retain the collective bonds of the traditional African village.” (1995: 118). He then outlines several changes in approach such as moving from single shareholder accountability to multiple stakeholder accountability; the need to harness community spirit; the need for inclusive governance and performance structures; the need to shift from adversarial relationships to mutual trust, co-operation and tolerance and the need to move from managing people and resources to mobilising them, among others. He adds (1995: 120) that, if business is to be enhanced, there is need to seek an in-depth



understanding of how a village functions, extracting relevant elements and bringing them back to the corporation. He goes on to suggest six dynamics from village life that deserve consideration: (1) Grass-roots democracy functioning through open discussion forums (Ndebele = *indabas*; Shona = *dare*); (2) Rituals and ceremonies to celebrate achievements or share misfortunes and recognise achievement; (3) The respect for position, authority and expertise, which thus brings order and stability; (4) The appreciation of mutual trust, respect and care; (5) Collective unity and a common agenda; and (6) The open discussion of problems to arrive at an acceptable, if not final, solution (1995: 121-122).

We have made some effort here to note several details of Mbigi's proposed management philosophy because he presents a culturally relevant and worldview based model (he is not, however, the first to suggest integrating *ubuntu* into management theory and practise.) We have endeavoured to show how it can be applied in the business/management/organisational realm. The concept clearly has significance for our exploration of administration from a cultural perspective.

Hence, in asking my co-researchers for their responses to this idea, they all agreed with Mbigi's hierarchy. But Joyce pointed out that it does not reflect a Christian worldview and, in fact, is problematic for the Christian because of the deep, unspoken links to the spirit world. George agreed, adding that acceptance of this approach for the Christian would raise serious questions about one's faith. Beki pointed out that African cosmology is anthropocentric: whatever happens, good or bad, is understood not so much in terms of God but of 'me' and whether or not He is blessing me. He noted, also, that Africans tend to be more comfortable with the Old Testament, looking to God's power in life to deal with sickness, childlessness, work-related problems and so on.

On Mbigi's use of *ubuntu/unhu*, Dawson said many of these values are carried over into the Church. He suggested that respect and other values are valid for the Christian, but the philosophical concept should only be used superficially and not to a deeper level as this is likely to result in negative linkages with the spirit world. Joyce commented that the idea of having celebrations is a good one, but also agreed with Dawson's caution against taking the model too far. Beki noted that *ubuntu* helps with productivity because the concern is for the person rather than the work itself. In the Western approach, he said, you are given an office and a job description and if you don't pull your weight, you're out. But ministry involves people, and their situations must be taken into account. So *ubuntu* should add value to the Christian faith.



Dawson then commented that the chief is typically dictatorial/autocratic, which he says, agrees with Scriptural standards and Biblical leadership. “But again, it is at a different level. God is an autocrat. He doesn’t ask other people’s opinions. As a leader, I share some of His responsibility. There is some element of chieftainship, but I must be flexible and sensitive that I am dealing with people; I must exercise leadership and authority to the extent God has given me. Completely democratic leadership is not Biblical and neither is dictatorship.” Joyce chipped in: “It’s a delegated authority.” “Yes,” Dawson went on, “but I’m also accountable. I need to rule, but it must be within the limits of my delegated authority from God. The pastor is not accountable first to the congregation but to God. Authority and accountability must be balanced.”

### *1.3 A Christian Worldview*

Since we are examining the praxis of administration within the context of Shona and Ndebele Christians in vocational ministry, we must now briefly explore some of the main factors of the Christian worldview. Of course, it becomes apparent immediately that, in addition to noting the clash of perspectives in terms of Shona/Ndebele and Western worldviews on the one hand, and urban versus rural lifestyles on the other, for the Christian, there is a third dynamic that complicates – and yet, also ought to reduce or eliminate – the tensions arising from this modern-day collision. Part of this tension is reflected in the dissonance between praxis and theology. This will be discussed in Chapter Seven as we seek to articulate a contextual theology of administration and, in the process, address the possible reasons for this variance between belief and behaviour.

Some claim to eschew the concept of a Christian worldview; this is neither Biblical nor realistic. But, as we seek to identify and define the Christian worldview, however, we face the same problem that all Christians do: like the fish that cannot define water because it has nothing with which to compare it, the average Christian is not taught their faith specifically as a worldview but, rather, as a system of beliefs and a resultant expected lifestyle. Indeed, there is a given expectation – nay, a constant challenge – that the life so lived will reflect what is believed as well as bring honour to the One upon and in whom such belief is based. Although it is not usual for a believer to think in worldview terms since the term “worldview” is not typically used in this context, the transformed lifestyle that is the hallmark of a faithful disciple is evidence of a changed worldview perspective. Hence, it is legitimate to speak of a Christian worldview as being a particular view of reality. Thus, we must pay attention to the clashes resulting from this worldview and one’s natural worldview.



The Christian worldview comes to every believer as a challenge to their culture, identity, lifestyle, priorities, expectations, judgements and, even, emotions. It is for each believer to decide how their faith will translate into transformed thinking and living according to the call from Jesus Christ, via the Word and through the enabling of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the acceptance of Christ as both Saviour and Lord should be life-transforming. But what does this religious worldview look like? How do we identify it; what labels do we attach to it and, significantly, what implications does it have for our human-based worldviews and cultures?

Green (Dockery and Thornbury, 2002: 62-78) suggests that the theological foundations of a Christian worldview must include consideration of God (particularly as Creator), the Fall, Redemption and the lordship of Christ, while philosophically, such a view of reality must also look at truth, faith, communication, the past and the future. He acknowledges that not everyone would choose these particular themes, but suggests the theological issues are the basic minimum. (By contrast, for instance, we saw earlier that Noebel has no less than ten key philosophical/social areas including, for the Christian, God.)

In another approach, Van der Walt, in using Niebuhr's well-known four-fold grid about Christ and culture as a model, posits a similar four-fold approach to Christian worldview. Before laying these out (S.a: 39-40), he first asks why Christians, although holding to a broad confession of faith, still have such divergent views about their faith. He then explains (S.a: 38) that most Christians do not fully understand the core concepts of their confession in an all-encompassing sense, but tend to see them in narrow terms only. The key concepts he lists as creation, fall, redemption (or grace) and the Kingdom of God. This failure, he says, has resulted in a dualistic Christianity, with a secular or natural component and a religious or supernatural one. This, in turn, has led to confusion about the link between redemption (grace) and nature and, from this, we have four approaches to Christian reality. These he lists as: (1) *gratia contra naturam* (that is, grace **against** nature), where the antithesis between creation and redemption leads to a rejection of worldly things such as politics, philosophy and science; (2) *gratia supra naturam* (grace **above** nature), which is the classical Roman Catholic view since Thomas Aquinas, in which grace (that is, redemption) does not reject nature but only perfects it [without changing it]; (3) *gratia juxta naturam* (grace **alongside** nature) which is the typical Lutheran view, where both nature and redemption are equal in value but without any liaison between them, such that, while a Christian can be a politician, his faith does not say anything to his politics; and (4) *gratia in naturam* (grace **penetrating into** nature), which typifies the Reformational view because grace is able to transform creation. This, van der Walt, suggests, can be labelled *gratia naturam transformans*.



This four-fold grid helps to explain the links between the Christian and natural worldviews and, to some extent, the reasons for various actions and inactions as Christians. Still, we should explore more directly the dichotomy between the expectations raised by our Christian worldview and the problems caused by the mistakes we make in our administrative praxis.

David Gushee (Dockery and Thornbury, 2002: 109) gets a little closer to the problem when he notes the dissonance between belief and behaviour. “One of the great flaws of the moral instruction that young people typically receive,” he says, “is the failure of teachers, preachers and parents to ground moral norms in a broader Christian worldview. High-schoolers may know they are not supposed to have sex before marriage but not why they should not do so.” This observation applies to a wide cross-section of lifestyle issues. Christian education, it seems, has done an excellent job in imparting Biblical information and truth, but has been less effective in challenging and changing behaviour. It is tragic, perhaps, that the noble ideal of Sunday School – to correctly nurture young children, teenagers and adults in the ways of the Lord – may actually inoculate them against the deep issues of the Gospel precisely because the deeper issue of the foundational worldview is not adequately covered.

This problem must also be asked in the context of culture. Is the gap between belief and behaviour not also, perhaps, the result of a gap in understanding between, on the one hand, the Biblical culture and that of the “missionary” (whoever that is, not just the vocational evangelist) and, on the other, the “missionary’s” culture and that of the recipient of the Gospel? If *intra*-cultural teaching is falling short of the demand, how much more *inter*-cultural or *cross*-cultural teaching? But if we are not sufficiently cognisant of our worldviews (natural or Christian) to begin with, the resultant clashes will likely continue unabated.

Concludes Gushee (Dockery and Thornbury, 2002: 126):

In the time between the first and second comings of Christ, we catch glimpses of what N. T. Wright calls ‘the victory of God’, but we are not privileged to see that victory in all of its fullness. The church remains a pilgrim people, on the way to the heavenly city but not yet there, meanwhile called to reclaim the earthly city for Christ and experiencing both victory and defeat in so doing. This is who we are, where we are, what we are doing, why we are doing it, and what we can expect. It is our worldview, the story of our life and the life of our world.

Having drawn attention to the concept of a Christian worldview, we are better able now to evaluate the administrative enterprise from such a perspective and to ask how a Christian should administer. However, as I have already pointed out, there is often a dichotomy between belief and practice or, more legitimately, perhaps, between what others expect me to believe (but which I may not for a variety of reasons) and my praxis. In addition, this dichotomy may well be aggravated by cultural norms that contradict the Word of God. This is



why it is important to investigate and to articulate a theology of administration and then to inculcate that into one's natural worldview (adapting the latter, of course, in line with the Word of God). This will be explored in the next two chapters.

## 2 *A Parenthetical Note on Personality and Administration*

We have taken some time to briefly examine the Shona and Ndebele worldviews as well as to suggest an outline of the Christian worldview as an added factor in the mix. It is perhaps necessary at this juncture, however, to point out another dynamic in the praxis of administration, especially on an individual basis, that worldview alone does not explain.

It will be recalled from our conversations in previous chapters that my co-researchers had varied approaches to the different aspects of administration. We saw, for instance, personal preferences in the ways each of the factors under discussion – time management, planning, organising, leading and controlling – are done (or not, as the case may be). This is over and above, or in spite of, one's cultural proclivity and worldview.

Although I am exploring the hypothesis that one's worldview is a major determinant of an approach to the praxis of administration – which suggests a 'universal' influence within that ethnic group – we have observed also that, individually, one's praxis of administration is shaped by personality and temperament as well. Hence, within any given cultural or ethnic group, one will find some who are very effective administratively while others are absolutely hopeless. Some will be more concerned, for example, with punctuality; others not. Some will be very capable planners and organisers; others will not have the first clue. Some will be competent leaders, where their influence is 'natural', unforced and, indeed, appreciated; others try to lead or manage and get little or no response unless it is through position or, even, by coercion. Some are able to control (that is, manage, measure and discipline) such that they achieve willing co-operation and support; others find such control extremely difficult and distasteful – and consequently, are not very successful at it. Moreover, since the elements of planning, organising, leading and controlling all involve a modicum of skill, it is possible for one to improve in their execution. And skills and competencies also vary from person to person. Therefore, within any given ethnic group, quite apart from the extent to which worldview dynamics may or may not impact praxis, it is also evident that personality, temperament and skill likewise play a critical role in the exercise of administration. So, the practise of administration is, in fact, both a 'universal' (that is, culturally within one ethnic group) phenomenon as well as a relative (that is, personal) one.



In the foregoing, we have outlined the general concept of worldview, considered some of the Shona and Ndebele traditions in particular, and have highlighted in some detail – from a management perspective – the core concept of *ubuntu*. All of this was to shed light on both the worldview dynamics exposed in our conversations in the last three chapters and the following two administration cases. We turn now to the first of these. As the stories unfold, we see practically and dynamically the place of worldview and personality in the saga of the events. First, Joyce tells her story.

### **3 Joyce's Story**

#### *"Graduation Ceremony of a Leadership Training School"*

We were nearly running late. I could hear the voice of my husband in the passage imploring everyone to get into the car. I dashed into the kids' bedroom and picked up a left shoe and jacket, plus a small toy to help keep the young boy entertained during the ceremony. Passing through the kitchen, I grabbed the bag with cool drink bottles and snacks just in time to meet my husband at the door with the keys.

Once the gate padlock locked, we zoomed past our suburb into town. It was with great enthusiasm and pride that we had received the invitation, almost two weeks ago, to attend a graduation ceremony for one of our rural pastors who had recently gone through a Pastoral Leadership Training School for a year with a well-recognised major church in the city. And we were excitedly on our way to attend this important ceremony.

We passed the last robot in town, managing to arrive at the venue just in the exact nick of the fore-mentioned time – 9:00 a.m. My first registration – mentally – of the fact that things were not quite right was given by the presence of a group of women dressed in uniform seated casually by the entrance of the church as though they were off on a trip some where. Moving to the back of the building, we again found some women chatting nonchalantly as they went about their business at church. As we glanced past the windows into the main church hall, our first suspicions were confirmed. We were definitely in the wrong place!

My husband recalled vividly that this was the venue mentioned to him. Now what were we to do? We knew no-one that we could contact in connection with this event. We dashed to the next Methodist church we knew in Nguboyenja as we told ourselves we could only but try two or three more churches before we gave up.

We arrived around 9:30 just in time to meet a gentleman coming from the back of the church. After asking, we were informed – to our great relief – that this was indeed the venue and that the starting time was indeed 9:00 a.m. Our relief was taken aback, however, as we began to



look around in amazement and notice that there was absolutely no-one there yet. We were definitely late but the first!

The organisers and graduands eventually began to trickle in after some 20 minutes. We were still seated in the car, not knowing what to do. By then, I was fidgeting around with my cell-phone trying to finalise a meeting in town with a friend to whom I needed to give a parcel. When I left home earlier on I had told her I could meet her at 11:00 a.m. as the service was going to last for just one hour – a generous allowance of an extra hour. By this time, I was trying to give her a better indication of when I could meet her. I tentatively suggested 12 noon and sent her an sms text message to that effect – to which she agreed.

We were finally ushered into the church at around 10:15 a.m. We dutifully sat in the pews as we waited for the graduands from different churches and lecturers from the school to arrive and be seated. Eventually, a lady Mistress of Ceremony greeted us with immense enthusiasm, reminding us that this was the graduands' special day, that we were to be glad and rejoice with them! After introductions, the ceremony began. We went into praise and worship, which took us the next half-hour or more. The ceremony went on interceded with testimonies and a lot of talk about the school from the MC.

My cell phone vibrated as it prepared to ring – I had forgotten to switch it off! My friend was trying to find out where I was so we could meet! I jammed the receiver shut – but then recalled how terrible it could be if my friend had to end up waiting for me if I was not there. So I desperately tried to switch it on and send her a message. And by then I was terribly blank about how and when this ceremony was going to end. All I could say to her was that I was right in the middle of the service and didn't know when it was going to end and that I would phone her once we were finished.

The MC announced again how it had all been forgotten that there was need to have a cameraman/photographer for graduation, but thanked God because, just that very morning they had come across a photographer who was now ere and prepared to take their photos at so much per card.

As the presentation of the certificates was about to start, an announcement was made by one of the leading lecturers – apparently responsible for the co-ordination of the training programme on behalf of the particular church. The Secretary had just phoned him that morning to say that half the certificates had been left in the office. So he was apologising on behalf of the school that some of the graduands will not be able to receive their certificates but they would be given later. Also present to receive a certificate apparently was a graduate from a previous class – who had not yet received a certificate!



As I sat in the pew that morning, I was concerned: my mind was vaguely aware of the fact that much of my concentration was now on the certificates – not the graduation. Having travelled almost 50 kilometres from town with his mum and a fellow church member, my thoughts were desperately focused on the hope that our rural pastor would receive his certificate.

By now, the time was well past 12 Noon. A sermonette was delivered by the lead lecturer as he extolled the students to go and preach the word, in and out of season, to be good leaders – in finances, morally and all areas just as they had been taught.

The final series of announcements were (1) concerning the fact that the photographer was, in fact, charging a cheaper fee for a double card as opposed to one, so if graduates wanted to line up for a second photo, they could do so. Many did. (2) They were also told something they had not been told earlier: that there was a charge required to go towards the printing of the certificates. (3) The third announcement was that there was something prepared for us and we were not to go away hungry without anything to eat.

As we moved out of the church, my thoughts were on how we could politely avoid joining the food queue as we were already late. One look at our people from the rural area jogged my memory back and reminded me that there was no way I could run away as they most probably needed transport from us into town. So, dutifully, after exchanging pleasantries with the leaders who knew my husband as a pastor, we sat at the eating table in a small room at the back of the church and waited – as they prepared tea, the cups, the sandwiches and the biscuits for us to eat before we leave!

By the time we were finally bundled into the car, it was well after 12 Noon, nearing one o'clock and I knew my friend would be anxiously waiting. We finally met her outside the bank after 1:15 p.m. What a day to remember!

As the sun finally set in the western sky that day, I had a lot of questions unanswered about leadership, administrative dynamics and control.

Having shared her story, the participants picked up on the various elements, the first being that of time management:

### 3.1 The Resulting Conversation

DM: These are things that affect us every day. “We were nearly running late.” Much of this centres on being late. We have a major challenge at home: it is most difficult for us to catch up on our time. We are dashing around. There’s pressure. This is very characteristic of life. It poses the first challenge of administration. This easily overlaps



into my office. Yesterday, I was under extreme pressure; there was so much to do. Later I felt pity for my wife: I thought, 'How is she coping with this?'

GM: But I'm proud that we are improving. "We were nearly running late" shows a realisation that you are aware. Also, you were the first ones to arrive at the venue – even if you were 30 minutes late. The benefits of education are seen here. It reminds me of yesterday. I got home to come to college. I thought I was on time but on the way, the police stopped the ET [taxi] and that delayed us. This was a blow to me. In one of our first discussions, we talked about commitment, but my commitment to this meeting was now compromised. Most of our people have not developed a consciousness of time management.

DM: This is one group. Joyce and Chris were aware of being late. Then there was the other group who were so relaxed that nothing was organised properly. Yet, that consciousness can add to the pressure.

BM: We need to realise that time is a commodity which is non-reversible. That puts us under pressure. If someone comes late for the first appointment, your whole day is turned upside down. Even the MC [Mistress of Ceremonies] doesn't realise it: she says it's a special day, but doesn't treat it as such.

DM: But it's the event that's important.

I then shared a story of my own. I was invited to address a meeting of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) some years ago. The organiser came to see if I was available on the date (a Saturday afternoon) and said he would confirm the details with me. I usually have a sports commitment then, but it is flexible and, since this was an opportunity for ministry, I agreed. Later, the man confirmed the arrangements, both by telephone and in person. He informed me that a Deputy Minister was due to address the gathering before me. He also indicated it was an all-day affair. I had been asked to speak at 2:00 p.m. I arrived at the venue at 1:50 expecting to be met and ushered to the right seat. No-one was there! At 1:55, the first person arrived – a woman – who began looking for a broom to sweep the floor. Several minutes later, three other ladies arrived and proceeded to prepare the room. No-one greeted me. At 2:20, the man who had originally asked me to speak arrived, together with some others. At 2:35 I was asked to take a position behind the podium, along with five other people, one of whom was the Deputy Minister. After waiting for several more minutes, there was an introductory welcome (about 10 minutes), followed by the first speech for 15 minutes; the Deputy Minister was then introduced (five minutes) upon which she began her speech which lasted for 30 minutes. Someone else then stood up and began a third speech. I could



tell from what was being said that this was not a short, introductory talk but another address. By this time, it was 3:45 and I was yet to be introduced, never mind present my speech! I motioned to the organiser and called him outside. In whispered tones, I let him know that I was unhappy at having been invited to speak at 2:00 p.m. only to find myself kept waiting for nearly two hours; I pointed out that, on the basis of his having confirmed the time, I had made another commitment for 3:30 and so was already late for that through no fault of my own. I gave my apologies and told him I was going. Naturally, he was upset, but I emphasised the need to uphold one's promises.

DM: Yes, we haven't been acclimatised to the urban way. Our background is that we haven't worked with watches. Because of the community based village, we do things together. The other guy is not in a hurry. He understands that "we" are doing things together; so he expects me to pass by at some time. But we have now left that community village scenario. No-body told us things would change in town. Then both of us get offended. So, there needs to be some rehabilitation for us. That's why the MC [in Joyce's story] didn't apologise. When you come into a different environment, you must learn what the new expectations are.

BM: That's the problem with our weddings and our funerals. The different needs mean different pressures of time, for example, the transport guys are chivvying us along, the caterers are chasing us ...

GM: I had a funeral. One parlour offered a quote [that was] \$15 million cheaper but that meant they were very busy and had to keep to time. They suggested in the afternoon, but the parlour had it in the morning.

That reminded me of a story from one of my former students. As the pastor of a large, 1500-strong congregation, he was often busy with weddings. On one particular Saturday, he relates, he had no less than nine weddings in succession. He told each couple and their families very sternly beforehand that it was essential for them to be on time, otherwise it would upset everyone else through the day. He warned them that if they were late, they would go to the back of the queue. Needless to say, the first couple arrived 50 minutes late. True to his word, he told them they – and their guests – would have to wait. Naturally, they were angry but, as they were remonstrating with him, the second couple's party arrived – so he conducted that wedding. The next couple were only a few minutes late and he did that ceremony. And so it went throughout the day. Eventually, after everyone else had finished, the first couple were wed. It was a sobering lesson to many families, guests and friends. The pastor was unapologetic, stressing the need to abide by one's agreements – including wedding vows!



DM: This [keeping time] is a major problem for us.

The discussion then shifted to the issue of the wrong venue:

GM: Chris took it for granted that he knew the place. The information should be printed on a card.

CM: For us it was an issue of communication. We were given the details verbally. In the intervening two weeks, the venue was changed but we were not told.

DM: This may have been aggravated by your busy schedule: you could have confirmed beforehand. I've been invited with cards, but I have misread it and gone to the wrong place. A relaxed schedule would have helped.

JN: Sometimes you get yourself over-committed. You don't realise it until you're caught up in the snare. Then it's very difficult to get out.

BM: Priorities are very important. For example, Andrea Sibindi [a local area pastor and former College student] goes to every meeting in town – by bicycle. He fits in his commitments.

GM: There's a saying, "If you want something done, get a busy person to do it." A busy person has an organised mind so that he gets things done. When I was in my secular job, I learned to reduce my time of the work needed from eight hours to six. In the time saved, I asked my superior for more work. In the beginning, he gave me what he didn't enjoy doing. I'd do it in no time at all. Then he'd give me some more. Then he realised he had time to relax. He would do the same to his superior and, in due time, would be promoted – and then he would recommend me for promotion to his position! In the meantime, I would have learnt something of the job and gained free in-house training.

The next issue raised was that of organising:

DM: Levels of leadership are different. The senior might have done his job but the subordinates might not have done their jobs properly. Or the senior may not have delegated. The senior must take the blame because the responsibility remains with him.

BM: We need to teach people to do fewer things better. Some leaders are trying to do everything; to be everywhere at once.

But, why do people seem satisfied with poor quality? I asked.

GM: People are hungry for knowledge. So, "half a loaf is better than nothing"

DM: Culturally we cannot refuse something even if we don't want it. [But shouldn't we push for better quality? I pressed.] It's difficult for juniors to suggest to their seniors doing it better. Also, if the seniors lack training and skills, they can't do better. If you've been



exposed, trained, equipped, you can compare and suggest something else. Exposure and development are critical.

GM: Ndebeles are very loyal. Even if you're not producing the results, they still follow. I was thinking how relationships can be matched with productivity and results. As long as we focus only on relationships, we'll never improve.

BM: When someone visits you endlessly, he drains you. For us to say, 'Ah, you just caught me. I was rushing out,' is very difficult because you don't want to offend; you want to be polite. So you spend the whole day under a tree talking about nothing. This is affecting us as pastors. I think we should be open and honest.

GM: I'm a people person. But because of interactions with other enlightened people, I'm trying to say politely, 'I'm busy at the moment. Let's make an appointment for another time.' One time, a man who owed me money phoned for me to meet him urgently. I had an appointment with someone else first – but then he didn't come. The second one wasn't there when I got to his work place. I went away and came back. Eventually, his wife arrived and the man himself phoned me at the same time. He came shortly afterwards and gave me my money. In the meantime, I had other things to spend the money on and I didn't even get it home. I've used that money to invest in further studies.

JM: We can't ask other people to accept good quality when our work is not up to standard. There's the issue of control: the Chairman didn't check with the Secretary about the certificates. Student assignments hadn't been marked. There was an extra charge unannounced for the certificates. To me, this was bad because he should have led by example.

CN: If the preacher was the main organiser, then his message – challenging the graduates to do their best; to be excellent – didn't match his performance.

DM: As Pentecostals, we challenge people through our preaching and speaking, but we don't have the skills and expertise. It's only now that Pentecostals feel compelled to sit down and study. We are stories people. This homiletics business ... I was teaching at another church's Bible school. A young man from my own church who came said I was wasting our time since the Apostle Paul didn't do this. But it's important to learn the roots and foundational principles.

GM: While I was at college, I remember a lecturer sharing with me that he had been excommunicated from his Pentecostal denomination after he graduated from college.

CM: This raises the question of evaluation. Who evaluates the man of God?



DM: Questioning this is just arrogance. The power and spectacular made the Pentecostals feel superior. We threw away the baby with the bath-water. These guys had some good stuff. But the Pentecostals said, 'Who are these? We're filled with the Spirit.' The activities are OK but the organisational process isn't there.

JN: The more the [graduation] service was extended, the better it was supposed to be. (DM: The longer it is, the more the anointing. [Laughter])

DM: There are two extremes and a balance is needed. To be so relaxed that it goes on too long versus everything done to the dot ... both may not allow the Spirit to work. How can people, exposed to the world all week, be upset if the service goes for more than an hour while if they go to other functions, they're prepared to stay for hours? How can a sinner, absorbed in his sin, be ministered to in 10 minutes?

JN: You get used to it. I'm now in a one-hour system [at church]. When I go to another service that's very long, I struggle.

DM: In worship, we need to understand the kind of God we worship. It shouldn't depend on what songs we sing or how long we sing for. It should be based on the focus of our worship and the moving of the Spirit.

Back to the story ...

DM: Joyce eventually met her friend at 1:15 p.m. So there are chain implications. She is affected by someone else. How would we (the affected) handle the next affected person?

GM: But there were people needing transport back home.

DM: So two groups need ministry. But it's not their problem. This is the dilemma of the pastor. You almost always get caught up in this situation. I have to finish ministering to the first person before I get to the next one. So, what do you do?

GM: I give an hour's appointment.

DM: But our schedules become so tight.

GM: This forces us to be more communicable with each other.

JN: We must execute a programme that doesn't put us under pressure. Have fewer appointments.

But if we assume that there will be poor organisation, I suggest, won't we develop a habit of allowing poor performance?



JN: We need to be more realistic. We need to think about the tasks before us. I had an appointment with my pastor. But a woman came in unannounced just at the time – and then took an hour ... I was kept waiting all that time!

BM: I had appointment at some Church offices. I sat for 1½ hrs waiting. Other people were getting in without appointments. Eventually, the person came out: 'Oh, I didn't know you were still here.'

DM: You pay subordinates to solve your problems. If they don't, fire them. If my secretary doesn't solve my administrative problems, I've got to run around again.

Perhaps, I offered, part of our problem is that we have become too busy; should it be like that?

DM: I've decided I need to slow down, but I have to start. [You need to make an appointment with yourself.] I've tried to withdraw from ministry activities outside my church programme. I dropped two last month. Now I feel a bit refreshed. I'm hoping to drop a third. I'll also drop a few church things too.

JN: I see Chris rushing around doing this, doing that. He often sleeps late. One help has been his new commitment to college [because he has had to turn down other requests]. It's also about others asking and you can't say 'no'.

DM: We need to ask our wives to vet our schedules. They're watching us!

GM: College helped me because I had to learn to say 'no' to other activities.

CN: It takes a lot of discipline to say 'no'. I learned from experience: when I started; I worked flat out, but in the end I suffered. I went to the doctor: there was nothing wrong with me. He told me to slow down.

DM: I had a high blood pressure problem, but I've slowed down now. I got a letter from my young daughter: Why are you doing that? Why can't you get someone else to do it? So now I pay attention to her.

GM: I'm preparing for the time when the Lord takes me home. What will happen to my wife and children? So, I'm empowering her by encouraging her to get a degree; she can then make her own decisions about her future.

DM: It's not a curse to be called into ministry. If the Church is God's institution, and if God cares for the widow and the orphan, then the Church should take care of the pastor's wife. We need to educate the Church. Just as we teach the Church to give and to use their spiritual gifts, we need to teach them about tomorrow.

On the question of giving/support ...



GM: You may not have financial acumen, so you live beyond your means or from hand to mouth. Colleges should teach financial management.

DM: The Church needs to be taught how to raise Timothys. We need financial systems as well as leadership development systems. This may be hindered by denominational structures and polities.

GM: Most pastors seem to have the maintenance mentality: they have a fear of those rising up, so they throw them out. They aren't prepared to let the reins go.

JN: I wish the mother church could monitor the activities of its leaders and programmes so that they are responsible enough.

GM: But the leaders are not properly informed, trained. We need analysis; we need to be open.

DM: Should this training come from Bible schools?

GM: They give principles, which you apply in your context.

DM: Should the training be broader than Bible schools to cater for a variety of ministry needs. Have refresher courses to keep people sharp.

BM: It's true that College doesn't make you a Christian, or give you a calling or give an assurance of ministry. The calling comes first; College then sharpens you.

### 3.2 Reflections on the Dialogue

In spite of some roving conversation – to be expected in a semi-open discussion – the participants identified problems in all five areas of time management, planning, organising, leading and controlling. Notably, although several of these difficulties were acknowledged – particularly time management, planning and organising – there was only superficial recognition it seems of any connection with worldview factors. This makes change tricky because, unless and until the underlying issues are recognised, they cannot be dealt with satisfactorily.

For instance, time management was conceded as a fundamental issue that affected everyone involved, to varying degrees of negativity and annoyance, but apart from admitting the problem and saying “something should be done”, there was no in-depth analysis by my co-researchers of any underlying worldview aspect that may in fact militate against taking any action, despite the general feeling that this is a problematic area.

Then again, while relationships (harmony) is a major dimension of both Shona and Ndebele culture and worldview, its cousin – the fear of offending – is more assumed than emphasised.



Often, it seems, this fear is used as a scapegoat so that the fault is conveniently excused or ignored. So, while poor time management, planning and organising meant inconvenience and disruption (even for someone not present or associated with the event at all!) it appears nothing was said at any time during the ceremony, either to the organisers or the MC, nor, notably, did my co-researchers suggest what could have been done.

That all said, however, it is positive that the problems are recognised at least. That, decidedly, is the start of the journey! Also, the discussion highlighted similar problems for my co-researchers in their respective ministries. This gave them a useful opportunity to assess their positions, attitudes and probable responses to the problems identified. Indeed, they all commented at the end of the day that it had been a constructive, thought-provoking exercise.

#### **4 Beki's Story**

Beki related the following saga from a ministry colleague:

Recently I learnt the hard way when I realised that there are some things that are happening in the Church without my knowledge and approval. Some individuals and committees feel that they can make decisions for the Church without my consent. I assume they feel they know what's best for the church [rather] than the pastor. When I dug deeper into the issue, I discovered that those who are stirring the confusion in the Church have domineering personalities. They want to boss people around, including the pastor. [A] few weeks ago in a meeting, my associate pastor was attacked ruthlessly for not conducting a leadership seminar even [though] he tried to explain his problem. As if this was not enough, I got a phone call from one of the Board members asking me to submit weekly routine and hours to him. He said he wanted to see how I do my work during the week.

Reading between the lines, I realise that some people in our Church have been left for a long time to do their own things under the name of serving the Lord, so now it is very difficult to keep them under lock and key. There is an element of a power struggle buttered [*sic*] with a lack of submission and accountability. I discovered from these incidents that seniority does not equal maturity.

Some of the leaders think they are there to supervise the pastor. They don't see themselves as co-workers serving along with him. If anything goes wrong the pastor is blamed. Their job is to expose the weaknesses and failures of the pastor and this is used as a tool against him. When the Church Board becomes a "Fault Finding Commission" for the pastor, the idea of team ministry is thrown out of the window.

##### **4.1 The Resulting Conversation**



DM: [On the Elder who wanted to check on the pastor's work schedule] I first thought that is wrong. I thought it was a case of him picking into the pastor's activities because they wanted something to use against the pastor. But, if the pastor just disappears, without anyone knowing where he is or what he is doing, that's also bad. Both extremes are wrong. There should be a middle path.

GM: In many churches, the Elders act like the pastor's employer. It's wrong. In my case, no-one approached me [like that]; when I do home visits, I have someone with me. Whatever I'm doing, I must have someone so that if anyone wants to check on me, they can. To avoid me being pained about them, I call someone to go with me. I tell people what I'm doing. Sometimes, I have had to take someone to hospital and I would be there all night. I would go home at 4:00 a.m. and then be at college for my studies.

But isn't accountability a problem? I asked. People don't know what the pastor actually does from hour to hour and this encourages a lack of accountability.

GM: How we get into ministry is also a factor. I started the Assembly. Everyone found me there from the beginning. But where the church is up and running [and] the new pastor comes in ... he finds the elders, the structure, the ladies are all there. And there is the thinking, 'We hired him.' So the attitude is that the pastor can be checked up [on].

CN: It seems there are several negative attitudes underlying this situation. Surely, there would be regular meetings about the ministries of the church; so why ask the pastor to submit his schedule? There seems to some domineering personalities. They don't care who is who. That speaks of a deeper problem.

DM: The pastor is wounded and bitter, and his reaction (second paragraph) suggests he is going in the wrong direction. It is most important that he must change his attitude towards others. If he doesn't, the battle will go on and on; and he will lose. It will be difficult for him since he came in later.

JN: The leaders see themselves as there to watch over the pastor; it shows that he has been put in a corner.

DM: When you are in a corner, you won't see your faults as things to be corrected but as an attack – and I defend myself. I can't correct it.

GM: A key is to teach the Word of God expositively. The Bible itself will speak to them to be submissive to the one in authority.



JN: He also needs to look at himself and to ask, why is this 'fault-finding commission' doing this? He should ask about the weaknesses and failures that they are concerned with – and then do something about them.

GM: Many pastors are underpaid. They then try doing projects which are done at the expense of the congregation. The Church must be the first priority; your financial needs come second.

BM: The leaders [might] see him as lazy and not pulling his weight.

DM: What would happen if he prepared his detailed schedule and presented it to a Board meeting? If he does it collectively, he will avoid splits.

But what if he is sloppy and doesn't have a strong schedule? I asked.

DM: Then as he prepares his schedule, he should recognise the weaknesses and make suggestions as to how he can change and improve.

BM: His point of departure is "I'm only accountable to God"

DM: Then he's got a problem

GM: Yes, there's an attitude there.

CN: He is expecting the leaders to be accountable to him. But then I ask, "If they are working as a team, why is he uncomfortable with them asking him to be accountable?"

DM: If he hasn't been leading well from the start, these problems may have developed over time.

GM: He needs some leadership training. He wants the power, but he doesn't know how [to get or use it].

DM: Is he from an independent church or a larger denomination?

BM: He's from a larger grouping.

DM: Then other seniors can be called in. The elders are also accountable to the larger group. This interaction can help both sides.

DM: When I went away, I left the Church in the care of my one of our Elders and we appointed him as my assistant. Immediately I left, I got the shock of my life. The guy who took over had so many ulterior motives. His attitude was: 'This guy hasn't been doing things right. Nothing has been done right. I'll change everything so it works properly.' The first few months went all right for him, as he tried to show that I hadn't done anything right. But later the people started resisting him and he was really hurt. The whole thing centred on the attitude that nothing has been done up to now. The minute you come in



with that attitude, you leave people behind. They always have a point of reference. When I came back, it was difficult for him. He had also tried to build himself up and had made some funny statements. People started caucusing against him. If I wasn't there then, there would have been resentment.

JN: So, is it too late now? Can anything be done?

DM: It depends on his attitude. Can a senior from the denomination come in to help and advise him and the leaders? If he's not willing to change, then we can't help him.

GM: He could also ask for a transfer to a new church after he has realised his mistakes. He can then start afresh.

JN: If he transfers, then the problem spreads to two congregations.

But, if he changes his attitude, he won't need to transfer, I interjected.

CN: If he transfers, the leaders won't have their attitudes sorted out; they will assume they've 'won'. Then the next pastor will be treated the same way.

What about leadership style and communications? I asked.

BM: [He is] dictatorial/autocratic. He's tough, pushy. He's reactive rather than proactive. His communication is weak and his organisational skills are poor. He's not a good organiser or a visionary. He may have personality problems – self-image, and so on.

Should he be a pastor in the first place? I wondered aloud. Is he a square peg in a round hole?

BM: [I'm] not sure.

DM: The problems are grown to confrontation – they are ruthlessly attacking the associate pastor in a meeting.

BM: He is hot-headed, having had some fistfights in the community.

GM: This means the seniors are responsible and haven't been doing their job. Do they know? Since the discussion was drifting rather aimlessly, I then shifted the focus to ask about worldview issues involved in this story.

GM: He has already lost his dignity. Dignity goes along with leadership. (For instance, see David – dancing – and his wife) This has opened him up so that he has lost the respect of his people.

CN: In African culture, do the people ask the chief what he is doing?

GM: Then you have lost your dignity.



JN: This should be looked at in terms of the church structure. Who reports to whom? You could have a situation where the pastor is like a CEO who has to report to a Board which is not exercising its duties properly.

BM: [He's] the Chief: [so] who can oppose me? Question me?

CN: Do the people see themselves as having the power to ask what the chief is doing? Does the pastor feel they have no such right to question the chief?

BM: He says, 'They don't know how God called me. Who are they to question my calling?'

GM: Then he should be an apostle [that is, a church planter]. The people were there before him; they think, 'What right does he have to question us?' They know things that you don't know.

BM: I used to go to a certain church. It was owned by a certain tribe. [Their attitude was,] 'People should know that things must be done our way.' When this was questioned, you would be told to find another church. ... He's also feeling that people are after his position, so he has to protect himself.

I asked: Doesn't this suggest he has a wrong perception of a call to ministry?

DM: The best way to defend yourself is to minister to the people. [He then outlined the story of his church split when some of his leaders defected. He set conditions for their return, but nothing happened. Then he went overseas. The Assistant Pastor quickly changed things and invited others to meetings to gain support. On his return, he confronted the Assistant and others and was able to resolve matters. Now they are happily reconciled.] When God calls you to do certain things, He has to give you the enablement. If this guy has a calling to do certain things, God will enable him. If you don't have the necessary grace, the things you do will either hurt you or help you. If people function within that calling, things will work out.

GM: We've also had several splits. In one instance, a pastor stole some money and, as he was being disciplined, transferred church property and built a church. But the roof collapsed. Before he rebuilt it, he went back to the Archbishop and reconciled. You shouldn't start a church in bitterness. Do it properly, start from scratch; don't steal sheep, evangelise new converts.

At this point, although the discussion on worldview factors in this story had started well enough, the conversation was obviously drifting again. So, I thought it might be helpful to provide some direction and picked up on Mbigi's suggestions about village organisation (Mbigi, 1995: 120-122) as a starting point. The following discussion then ensued:



GM: What's kept our church united for so long has been "Deeper Life Conferences". [This relates to Mbigi's suggestion for celebrations, rituals and key events.] We would meet everyone for a week. There would be teaching with invited speakers. The theme of the year would be introduced. On one of the days, delegates would share their feelings about what was happening in the Church [see Mbigi's aspect of consultation and common agenda]. Now that the Church has grown so big, we have three seminars: one for pastors, the second is for the elders and the third for the deacons. In each case, there would be a conference day where everyone has a chance to discuss anything in an open forum. In the end, everyone has a single mind about the Church. This has kept the Church united and people have been refreshed and equipped for ministry. It's this grassroots involvement that has kept the Church united.

DM: I disagree with the last point on [there not being a] final solution [to Beki's friend's problem]. There must be a final solution.

GM: Repentance and reconciliation bring a lasting solution.

Then, regarding on-the-job security, George added, "I saw a film about an old lion that couldn't hunt any more. The others attacked it and pushed it out. Through hunger it was killed by jackals. So, if you're not useful to the community, they sideline you."

DM: Yes, because it's a community thing. But the other side is the chieftainship: that's mine until I die. That becomes a sinecure – if I don't do my job as chief properly it doesn't really matter.

BM: It's more than holding a position; it's about being useful. Sometimes leaders cease to be useful. They will say, 'No matter what, I'll remain the chief/king.' But when I represent the people – a privilege – I have an equal responsibility. I don't mind what they think or feel.

GM: Whoever gets into a position of authority wants to strengthen it. That puts you in a box because those around you will tell you certain things so that you remain. The leader puts fear into the people so that he maintains power. Unlike [former South African President, Nelson] Mandela, some leaders – even church leaders – are unapproachable. Enlightened leaders shouldn't be afraid of what people are saying about us; we should check it. God may be speaking through them. Then we correct our mistakes. That has helped me so much.

#### 4.2 Reflections on the Dialogue



Again, in this case, despite a stated desire for a thrust on worldview factors, these did not come out clearly until I deliberately coaxed such responses. More than in the first instance, the discussion tended to drift off into inconsequential – but still interesting – topics. The participants were absorbed in the dialogue.

The primary issues in this instance were leadership (including style and delegation) and control (accountability in particular). Once more, the problems were readily identified and some solutions proffered – but with only two direct references to specific worldview dynamics: that of dignity and the chieftainship. Only as I brought in particular aspects connected with village life did other worldview facets come into focus (job security and authority). So, once again, we see a ready recognition of problems but not a concomitant appreciation of the possible underlying causes. My worldview is my view of reality, but I don't always see the connection between that and what I do!

## 5 Conclusion

Following various references to worldview in the previous three chapters, this chapter has explored the nature of worldview in general and given several definitions of the notion. We then looked specifically, albeit briefly, at Shona and Ndebele historiography and some of the basic worldview dynamics. We noted in the latter two cases the emphasis, in particular, on community, relationships, their cosmology and the spirit world. In completing this section, we examined briefly the philosophy of *ubuntu/unhu* and shared some ideas on how this may be used to transform the Southern African business environment, with special reference to the management of organisations from an Afrocentric perspective. However, it was noted that the proposed approach, being spiritual but non-Christian, is based on deeper values anathema to the Christian. We also looked briefly at the Christian worldview and pointed out the problems arising from a clash of cultures (African and Western, urban and rural, natural and spiritual) and the resultant tensions between concept and practice or belief and behaviour.

With that in mind, we then looked at two administrative case studies from two of our co-researchers. We noted from these that, although problem areas are easily identified, acknowledged and appreciated, the worldview dynamics underlying them are not so easily seen or esteemed. Joyce's story, perhaps, lent itself more to this than Beki's. Whereas Joyce's story involved an event with several people – making worldview factors easier to spot – Beki's focussed primarily on one individual and personality/leadership style issues. In this case, worldview factors are less directly visible. Like the proverbial fish that cannot describe water since it has no other medium with which to compare it, we have seen that describing



one's worldview, especially in a particular context like administration, is very difficult unless there has been a focused effort to study it.

In the next Chapter, we will round off our conversations with a final group dialogue that, hopefully, will allow us to articulate a suggested theological approach to administration. This, too, is likely to be difficult, since this is not typically an area we are called upon to verbalise (the emphasis in typical theological training being largely upon systematic, Biblical or social theologies). Nevertheless, we will endeavour to explore the field so as to present a proposal to this effect. The endeavour here will be to establish a theological basis, grounded upon Scripture, for administration performed in a Christian service context.



## Chapter Seven

### **CHRISTIAN ADMINISTRATION: Towards Contextual Theologising**

#### **1. Introduction**

The concept of administration within the contexts of the Shona and Ndebele peoples and within Christian ministry has been explored in some detail. It now remains for us as a group to propose a theological foundation upon which Christians could seek to undertake their administrative tasks. It is hoped that, as we explore this, we will discover a Biblical foundation for the praxis of administration that will address most of the problematic issues identified in the investigation. This, in turn, may help to counter some of the negative effects of our cultural approaches to administration.

It is necessary at this point to reiterate what is meant here by “theology” and, more specifically, a “theological approach to administration” in the context of Practical Theology. As a Christian, I understand God as the Prime Source since He is the Creator. As an Evangelical (see below, section C. 1.), I see the Bible as God’s authoritative, progressive revelation of Himself and His plan for “His-story”. Hence, in the process of revealing God in terms of who He is and what He has done, is doing and wants to do, it offers essential practical guidelines on God-honouring attitudes and behaviour for those whom He has redeemed. This includes administration since the Scriptures reveal much about God’s planning, organising, leading and controlling, together with the ways in which He expects human beings to function within His intended scheme. From these points of departure, I come to understand that general theology is our articulation about our understanding of God; it shapes the way we respond to Him and to others. Within that context, it is possible to speak of a theological basis for and approach to our behaviour and, hence, a theology. This theological approach to a subject gives the Christian a God-directed basis and rationale for functioning the way they do.

For some, this may appear to contrast with or, even, contradict, what is typically understood as theology – usually either Systematic, Biblical or some form of contemporary theology. My understanding here is not to contradict or reject these other theological perspectives but, rather, to supplement them as something analogous. For this enquiry, the broad focus is practical theology (see Section 2.2.1 in Chapter One), which draws on these theological disciplines and other fields of academia and pulls them together to provide a rationale for praxis. At the same time, the narrower emphasis is the basis for administration from a Biblical perspective (albeit not necessarily within a vocational ministry context only.)



Earlier (Chapter One, sections 2.1.4 and 2.2), the concepts of postfoundationalist, narrative practical theology were discussed. It was noted that practical theology from these perspectives means that the theologising process is context based and articulated through one's understanding of God and interpretation of Scripture, as well as the translation of these into action. It is bottom-up, that is, developed by the individual or community. This is in contradistinction to top-down theologising that is presented to the community by, usually, a formally trained theologian often using esoteric jargon. It should be understood here that, since all of us interact with God, we are all theologians. Some may be formally trained, others not. Since this enquiry is dealing with Christians in vocational ministry doing administration, we want to explore their views and understanding of God's perspective on the process.

There are two questions we wish to consider here:

*"Administrative Theology" and Praxis: What is the Connection?*

On the one hand, we have discovered in our dialogues that administration is not a concept that many people can articulate lucidly. Apart from the overlap and inter-changeable use of related concepts of leadership, management and administration, there is also the difficulty of defining what tasks actually constitute administration in the pure sense. How, then, in addition to all this, does one articulate a clear theological basis for administration? Moreover, in considering theology in general, the typical emphasis is usually on Systematics, Biblical or contextual theologies (for instance, Liberation, Black, African, Feminist and so on). We do not normally and deliberately investigate specific 'sub-theologies' such as leadership or administration. Nevertheless, every Christian develops over time an attitude and an approach to administration that reflects their understanding of God and their working relationship with Him. That this is probably subconscious and cannot be clearly articulated does not negate its existence. We might call this "layman's theology" for want of a better label.

That said, however, it raises the fundamental question: What does our "theology of administration" – in whatever form it may take – say about the way we actually do it? Indeed, can we make a connection at all if we cannot clearly articulate either of the topics?

On the other hand, if theology is supposed to shape our praxis, a second pertinent question also arises: Given the identified problems with administration in ministry, why does this (albeit sub-conscious) theology apparently not affect the way(s) we do administration? Or, to put it another way, if, as Christians, we have God's manual for living, so to speak, why does that not guide us as clearly in our administrative enterprise as we claim it does in other realms of life?



In seeking to address these two questions, we discussed the crafting of a culturally relevant theological approach to administration. This was done in the context of a one-day group retreat as a workshop. Initially, I had anticipated that the group would have reflected on their own theological perspectives beforehand and thus come prepared to share their insights. This did not happen. I also expected the group to work methodically through Scripture to discuss various passages relating to the core administration issues (that is, following a Biblical Theology approach rather than a Systematic one). This did not happen either. And thirdly, I further anticipated that the group would arrive at a commonly acceptable theological statement about administration that would reflect, at least in broad terms, the main issues raised in our prior discussions. Again, that never happened. In short, my expectations (broad, flexible and open to other's input as they were) did not go according to plan. Perhaps this was not too surprising, since none of us had ever attempted anything like this before. I realised afterwards that no-one in the group knew what to do in such an exercise, so nothing was done ahead of time; they all waited for me to give some direction to the process. And, not being aware of any similar example in the same field, I had nothing to share with them. There was, then, on the one hand an excitement at covering "virgin territory" and, on the other, some trepidation at moving into the 'dark' unknown.

As such then, the narrative discourse on Scripture, as will be seen from the dialogue below, was rather arbitrary. This was despite the group agreeing – contrary to my expectations since it is theologically artificial – to retain the fivefold grid we have used in our conversations to date (that is Time, Planning, Organising, Leading, and Controlling). They felt comfortable with the grid, not only because of our previous discussions along those lines but also, I suspect, because this breaks the concept of administration down into recognisable and workable components. Of course, it could be argued, then, that the theologising exercise could become more complex because the question, 'What is my/our theological approach to ...?' must be asked of each of the five specific elements and not just on administration in general.

Some may feel that this form of narrative theologising is inappropriate because such a task should be done by trained theologians using formal means of articulating theology. After all, they may argue, how can a person without such training think "theologically"? And besides, to think theologically is to articulate one's theology. However, Dyrness, in speaking of "vernacular theologies", puts the lie to such views when he suggests (1992: 31) that it is precisely as the common people interact with Scripture and express that revelation in daily life that they theologise. That they may not be able to articulate it does not minimise or eliminate its relevance or, even, the task of theologising itself. Indeed, he argues, correct theologising must *start* at that level and evolve as it is articulated and evaluated against practise. It is false



thinking he says, to start with John Calvin and Karl Barth and expect the ordinary Christian to be able to express a 'correct' theology at that level.

It is in the personal practise of Scriptural truth and how that is understood that a theology develops. Thus, a narrative approach to theologising allows the Christian to share a story (or more) that reflects theological thinking – however embryonic that may be. As Dyrness (1992: 34) puts it, “this is meant to give the people their voice. ... Narratives provide a more genuine picture of a people’s faith than do more objective modes, as people tend to ‘own’ their stories more than they do abstract descriptions.”

At the end of workshop, I felt very discouraged because it seemed as though the group had not accomplished what I thought should be done. On reflection, however, I realised that I had prompted and participated in exactly what Dyrness speaks of: a layman’s articulation, through stories and interaction with Scripture, of a practical theological expression of administration. Moreover, I also realised that, in line with Gehman’s (1987) suggested methodology, this is a process and not an event. Thus, I was probably expecting too much from a one-day discussion. Rather, this was the beginning of the process. It remains, therefore, to be continued and refined with further reflection, discourse and narratives. This may be a starting point, perhaps, even, a foundation upon which others may build.

Next, in seeking to address the second question, we noted Dyrness’ subsequent comment (1992: 37): “A corollary of this [giving people their voice] is that a people’s actual theology as it is practiced is not the same as they might claim that it is.” This relates, of course, to our earlier observation that, although the research group understands administration, there appears to be a dichotomy between an articulated ‘theology’ of it and the practice of it – as evidenced in our discourses through this investigation. Hence, having begun to theologise, we then closed the day’s workshop with a brief discussion of the possible reasons for the gap between belief and behaviour.

## **2. Discerning a Theological Method or Framework**

In working towards a contextual theology of administration (our first question), it is worth noting Gehman’s observation (1987: 75) critiquing previous attempts by African theologians (for example, Kwesi Dickson, Peter Kanyandago, John Kurewa, Charles Nyamiti, John Mbiti and Byang Kato, among others) to develop a Christian theology that is truly African. While commending them for beginning the exercise, he says: “We have sought to disclose the faulty foundation upon which they have begun the task. With a low view of Scripture, no theology will stand the test of time. Like so much of the experimental theologies of the West these days, they will last a few short years and then be bypassed for newer, ‘more relevant



theology’.” The problem is unbiblical presuppositions. “A faulty methodology will lead to a faulty theology even as a poor foundation results in a poorly constructed building.” (Gehman, 1987: 76)

Since what God – rather than man – says is the basis of all true Christian theology, our starting point for developing a possible theological framework must be His Word to us, the Bible: How does God address the issue? O’Donovan (1996: 4) defines such theology as: “[a] biblical statement of what the Bible teaches on a particular subject as one encounters that subject in various books of the Bible.”

But he then points out (1996: 5) some of the pitfalls of seeking to define an African theology using Western methodology and terminology: this does not answer the deep questions Africans have, nor does it allow them necessarily to correctly apply Scriptural answers to those questions. Second, there is the problem of syncretism – the merging of religious beliefs such that the truth of both is watered down and compromised. He recognises, however, that such theologising must be done in the context of the people who are practicing it. Hence, the exercise must also consider relevant worldview perspectives and how these shape one’s approach to the issue under discussion because of what the Bible says about it. This is exactly Imasogie’s point (1983: 26) as he calls for

new methodologies that are responsive to the life situations of modern man, as seen against the backdrop of divine self-disclosure. ... if the existential needs of Africans are to be adequately met by the Living Christ there must be a new theological guidelines that will take their worldviews seriously in mediating the claims of Christ.

This, indeed, adds credence to the narrative approach followed in this exercise. Unfortunately, as with their worldview and concrete understanding of administration, the group found it difficult to identify a culturally appropriate methodology for arriving at a theological basis for administration. So, again, this necessitated making some suggestions as prompts for this. I hoped this would stimulate discussion about an appropriate approach, but it did not. Thus, I was left to explain Gehman and O’Donovan. I stressed, of course, that this is only one way to theologise. Nevertheless, it was clear in their ready acceptance of this idea that they had no alternatives. They had no social construct of their own for such an task.

O’Donovan (1996: 4-5) suggests three steps: First, we must carefully establish what the Bible says about the subject in all the places where the subject is mentioned in the Bible. Second, we must determine what all these statements mean concerning that subject. This is done by analysing each statement according to the proper rules of grammatical analysis. We must then analyse each statement in its historical situation. Following this, we must compare the



various statements in the Bible on the subject with each other, in order to understand the Bible's complete teaching on that subject. Third, we must apply the Bible's teaching on the subject to life today.

Then, to avoid the problems alluded to above, he suggests posing three questions (1996: 6):

- A. What does the Bible say on the subject?
- B. How does African culture relate to what the Bible says about the subject (what beliefs and practices are related to this subject)?
- C. How can we express the truth of the Bible on the subject in a way that is clearly related to African culture?

But, he says, theology is supposed to change lives; this requires application to daily life – which is contextualisation. This process involves (1996: 6):

- (a) Defining the cultural problem or issue which needs to be resolved
- (b) Determining what the Bible says concerning this issue
- (c) Identifying what the culture says about the issue and why
- (d) Determining what cultural similarities or differences exist on the issue between the biblical situation and the local situation
- (e) Deciding how you would apply what the Bible says about the issue to your culture
- (f) Determining how your people would have to change their worldview and their beliefs in order to adopt the viewpoint of God on the issue
- (g) Determining how your people would have to change their practices in order to do the will of God in the matter
- (h) Deciding what you must do to help your people make the necessary changes
- (i) Deciding what strategy your local church could adopt to help your people make the necessary changes to deal with the problem

As stated previously, the group agreed to this model and in our discussions, we found it prudent to merge steps (a) with (c) and (b) and (d) with (e) as well as (g) and (h). We also decided, with the limited time available, to omit the last step.

Next, we noted Gehman's observation (1987: 76) that African theologising entails the important issue of contextualisation. He defines it (1987: 77) as:

a dynamic process whereby the people of God, living in community and interacting with believers throughout time and space, under the illuminating guidance of the Holy Spirit, proclaim in their own language and thought forms, the Word that God has spoken to them in their context through the study of the Scriptures.

He then elucidates this definition (1987: 77-89) before expounding four proposed principles or steps in the process of theologising (chapter four). He points out, though, (1987: 90) that this is not the only way to approach theologising (compare O'Donovan above). Gehman proposes (1987: 90-108) the following four-step process which the group similarly accepted beforehand:



(1) State your presuppositions. While acknowledging the oft-intended goal of objectivity, he says (1987: 90) the traditional (Western) scientific approach cannot measure truth or error. As such, the objectivity that is often alluded to is absent. We all come from cultural and religious backgrounds; we have been exposed to ideas upon which our already existing conclusions are based. Therefore, we must first state our presuppositions – our point(s) of departure – so that our audience knows the context in which we speak.

(2) Organise a plan for theologising. While it might be acceptable for one individual to craft a theology, as Gehman has rightly pointed out in his definition, this should ideally be done by “the living community of the people of God, interacting with believers throughout time and space” (1987: 95). He suggests that, from a contextual point of view, this is right for Africa, given the emphasis on community. By involving several people, the Body of Christ participates and the necessary resources and responsibilities are spread through the whole Church.

He advises that each denomination approve a Theological Advisory Group, enjoined to work within its own structures and procedures. Each group would research and prioritise their relevant needs. A carefully selected research team of three to five members, ranging from post-graduate ministers to grass-roots laypeople, should be appointed to investigate all relevant issues about the subject. The key person on this research team is the Manuscript Drafter, who is also the chairman of the team. The Research Team would meet regularly to strategise and plan their research, which should be as thorough as possible. It would include grass-roots input, as well as cultural dynamics such as relevant proverbs, traditions, symbols and analogies. Once the draft is compiled, it is evaluated by various resource groups who question, comment and refine the initial findings. After this latest input, the final draft of the theological statement is prepared for consideration by the Advisory Group which may suggest further work as necessary. Once this is completed, the Advisory Group must consider the specific target audience(s) to whom the Biblical study is aimed and the tools best suited to communicate the information. Gehman stresses (1987: 102) that quality results come from quality research and study, which in turn, require time and effort.

While this process is accepted, it seems that Gehman is speaking in broader or deeper and more comprehensive terms than this enquiry intends. So, although I accepted the principle, I also adapted it considerably – with some cautious reservations – to suit the specified structure



of this investigation and that of my group of co-researchers who, in principle, would function like Gehman's proposed working group.

(3) *Research the crucial needs.* These are found in our traditional past, our contemporary situation(s), in organised churches and in society in general (1987: 103). Obviously, this investigation is dealing with an already identified issue. However, as Gehman rightly asserts (1987: 104) "there is a tragic lack of biblical knowledge among believers. Because of a shallow and superficial knowledge of the Word of God, moral and organisational problems often develop. Situations arise in which people do not know how to deal with them biblically." (While this point is widely applicable, the root problem here, it seems to me, is both a lack of accurate Biblical exposition and the exegetical and hermeneutical skills to apply Scripture correctly to practical situations. But these aspects are outside the scope of this theological enquiry. Perhaps not entirely surprisingly, the narratives reported below highlight the shortfalls here. This, in turn, underscores the importance of a wholistic approach to correct theologising, exposition and application with integrity. As this particular theologising exercise is continued and developed further, this point will become even more significant.)

(4) *Establish your goals.* Gehman asks (1987: 106),

Why should the evangelical Christian churches be engaged in such a tedious process of theologising when in fact there are millions of people outside the churches who need to be evangelised? Historically, the evangelicals have primarily stressed evangelism with little attention given to theological reflection. The result is obvious today. ... Despite the fact that the vast majority of Protestants are evangelical at the grass roots level in Africa today, there are pitiful few who are sufficiently trained and well placed so that they are able to give leadership to develop an evangelical theology for the African context. What Christian churches need to realise is that if this pursuit of theologising is done with proper goals, it will help us to accomplish exactly what we are so deeply concerned about, namely, a revitalised, renewed church which is growing through evangelistic outreach.

Although Gehman is dealing with theologising from an African perspective in broad terms, and while he says "our primary goal in developing an African Christian Theology should be spiritual renewal among the churches and the building up the Kingdom of God" (1987: 107), our goals in this particular exercise were narrower in focus (see below, point 3.4 under "The Dialogue").

Having settled on an agreed theological method (that is, a combination of O'Donovan's and Gehman's approaches), we next sought an acceptable approach to the second question of why one's praxis often does not correspond with one's stated theology or Scriptural convictions. This relates hermeneutic to praxis. On this, Imasogie (1983: 68) asks whether



the behaviour of the African Christian suggests a need to re-evaluate presuppositions about the traditional Christian approach to theologising. The answer, he says,

is in the affirmative, as reflected in the following observation: *For years many sensitive pastors/theologians in Africa have noticed that in times of existential crisis, the average African Christian reverts to the traditional African religious practices. In some instances, pastors/priests (theologians, if you please) have themselves fallen victim to this irresistible reaction to existential confrontation. ...* The mere widespread incidence of this observation arouses suspicion about the adequacy of the ideological superstructure which forms the matrix from which the prevailing Western version of Christian theology was formulated.

Explaining the quasi-scientific worldview of the Western missionary, assuming it to be superior because it is 'scientific', yet unable to fully appreciate the spiritual dynamic of his Christian faith and, therefore, imploring Africans to change their worldview, he continues (1983: 69): "... deep down in the subconscious dimension of their beings, their cultural conditioning remained intact to determine their behaviour in moments of life-problems. ... To these Africans, Christianity was of no practical use in times of existential crisis." He suggests that the presuppositions underlying orthodox theologising in Africa have led to difficulties for the average African Christian who finds it easy to revert to traditional practices. Hence, we ask: Is the issue of an apparent lack of continuity between knowledge of Scripture and administrative praxis simply a matter of failing to articulate a relevant theology, or is it the result of failing to enculturate or contextualise theology properly? Either way, praxis is affected.

Also, as we reflect on the theology-praxis relationship, it is important to realise that action is most often predicated on what we believe. Even if that belief is not readily articulated, it subconsciously leads to action (or non-action). Belief systems are built upon and are part of one's worldview. For the Christian, we are taught from Scripture (preaching, Bible study), from what our teachers – both formal and informal – say and do (example) and from our interpretation of all this and God in our circumstances (experience). However, in many cases, including administration, there is often little direct conscious linkage between one's knowledge and interpretation of Scripture – our theological base – and the practice. Yet, this teaching necessitates a merging of two worldviews: the natural and the Christian. That what is taught as "Christian" behaviour and attitude is often not taught as Christian worldview is, perhaps, a major part of the problem here. This was clearly demonstrated in the ensuing dialogue.

### **3. The Dialogue**

Some worldview factors came into play as we prepared for the joint workshop. Having arranged a date and venue, and with all the participants confirmed, only two of the six in the group arrived on the day. Of the four who did not come, one pastor had a double funeral



(husband and wife) out of town – but failed to notify me; a second member travelled out of town, despite having confirmed earlier in the week he would be coming, while two others had a family emergency. This was notified to me. In this, we see worldview factors at play: A focus on the immediate, without recognition of the impact on others on the periphery, as well as a primary concern for those in immediate need rather than for prior commitments. Relationships are at the forefront, but not necessarily with any consideration of interconnectedness between them.

The workshop was then rescheduled a week later and five of the group were able to attend; the sixth had a prior commitment out of the country.

In our preparation for the workshop, as noted previously, the group decided on a mixture of both O'Donovan's and Gehman's approaches, since they harmonise quite readily. So we began by first discussing our presuppositions (Gehman) and followed this by using O'Donovan's three questions and nine steps (amalgamated) to complete Gehman's second, third and fourth stages.

### 3.1 Our Presuppositions

Five prior assumptions to our investigation were noted. The first was theological, in that all the participants in this exercise are Evangelicals. From a theologising point of view, this means fundamentally that we all take a high view of Scripture, seeing it as the inspired word of God and the final authority for life and practice. From this standpoint, we see Scripture as a united whole, and one of the two main ways in which God has revealed Himself (that is, through special revelation; the other is through general revelation, or creation.)

As Tienou (1990: 9) explains it: "In the history of the Christian church the word [evangelical; from the Greek, *evangelion*) has acquired the meaning of one who conforms to the essential doctrines of the Gospel and to the basic acts and truths of Christianity." As such, therefore, we hold to the cardinal doctrines of the faith: the incarnation, the virgin birth, the sinless life of Christ, His substitutionary atonement and bodily resurrection, justification by faith alone of all who trust in the sacrifice of Christ offered once and for all" (Tienou, 1990: 10). Hence, he adds, Evangelicalism "is the description of those committed to the historic Protestant Reformation understanding of the Gospel. It is a movement which is international and transdenominational in scope."

For a slightly different approach to understanding this theological position, especially from an African perspective, Ngewa, *et al.* (1998: xii-xiv) highlights the three 'worlds' of the African pastor (whom he calls Mumo): (a) The world of Christian faith, represented by the Bible; (b) The world of African culture, represented by the name he bears, the ancestry to which he



belongs and the social environment in which he and his parents grew up; and (c) The world of modern culture – his Levi jeans, Sony cassette player and his Michael Jordan poster on the wall of his dimly lit room. The search for a theology that spans the chasm between the Christ and these two cultures he loves presents him with somewhat of a crisis. Thus, says Ngewa (1998: xii) “any theology that would claim to be both African, contemporary and evangelical, that would truly relieve Mumo’s tension, should reflect a number of commitments: (1) The lordship of Jesus Christ over the powers of this world; (2) The Word of God and the Spirit of God as the only reliable guides to understanding the truth about the lordship of Jesus Christ; and (3) Applying this Biblical, Christ-centred faith to life in Africa.

This presupposition, secondly therefore, relates to Biblical interpretation or hermeneutic. As Evangelicals, we take Scripture to be the inspired Word of God and the final authority for life and practice. This means we must explore its teachings and seek to apply them relevantly to, and as our final authority for, our context. We understand Scripture to have one central message: God’s saving work for mankind through Jesus Christ and the resultant conquest of sin and evil, with the ultimate view of bringing Him the glory and honour He is due. As the Scriptures are interpreted and applied to our local context in this light, we must explore how the clash of cultures (the Biblical with our own) and the God-given principles can mesh authentically and with integrity to lead us in a lifestyle that glorifies the God we serve.

It should be noted here, perhaps, that this high view of Scripture does not, unfortunately, guarantee integrity in exegesis and hermeneutics. Experience indicates that upholding the authority of Scripture does not necessarily prevent its abuse through faulty exegesis. Indeed, as will be observed in the interaction below (section 3.5), there was very little attempt by the group to exegete the passages they referred to. In partial defence, it should be said that three of the group have had no formal theological training and so could not be expected to know how to exegete correctly. But, it may be asked, what is correct exegesis in an exercise of this kind? Stuart (1980: 20) defines it as,

a thorough, analytical study of a biblical passage done so as to arrive at a useful interpretation of the passage. Exegesis is a theological task, not a mystical one. There are certain basic rules and standards for how to do it, although the results can vary in appearance because the biblical passages themselves vary so much.

As will be seen from the interactions with the passages below, there was little thoroughness or systematic, analytical study. This does not automatically mean textual abuse, but it does bring into question the substance of the final interpretation. This was something I found disappointing, as noted in section 4.



The second main presupposition the group identified was that of our cultural context and the issues flowing there from. As Africans, there are inherent cultural factors that both define us and create problems for us. They are distinctly different from other (cultural) regions of the world. These include – among others, but not necessarily in order – such factors as: Fear, suspicion, envy, jealousy and time. There is the inherent emphasis on relationships and community. And, there is the ubiquitous and ever-influential spirit world, with its positive and negative forces. Then, alongside these dimensions of culture, there are also the resultant habits, traditions and subconscious assumptions that go with them that typically characterise an African as different from, say, an Asian or a Westerner. A philosophical example here is that of the concept of *ubuntu/unhu*, which we have explored previously. Then there are tribal or ethnic nuances that separate sub-Saharan people groups from each other – as typified by the Shona and Ndebele who, as having roots in the Bantu ethnic grouping, reflect many similarities but, also have significant differences peculiar to themselves. As our conversations have highlighted, these cultural dimensions reflect who we are as Africans and set us apart from others. Another example mentioned by Dawson was that African administration is linked to the chieftom concept and its related spiritual connotations: you can't plan your day-to-day activities because of possible spirit intervention; only the head of the family can speak to the larger issues on behalf of the family.

The third presupposition closely related to culture is identity. But, being somewhat problematic, Beki raised this issue as a question: What does being "African" mean? While "African" might often be construed as "black" or "indigenous", given the ethnic diversity of settled peoples in the Southern African context, to what does this accurately refer? Does this apply to black ethnic groups only, or to white, Asian, Coloured and other sub-groups as well by virtue of their being settled on the Continent? If it is legitimate to speak of an Afro-American, for instance, why not an Afro-European or a Euro-African? What, in fact, is 'indigenous' given that various ethnic groups have been settled in Southern Africa for centuries? While this question can be answered in part in terms of a recognisably distinct worldview, it is also true that people groups not originally from Africa but settled here have nevertheless absorbed some African worldview dynamics and cultures. These peoples now view reality somewhat differently from those still living in lands from which their forebears originated. There are worldview and cultural elements that are no longer in accord. So, identity for some of these may be an issue. For black Africans, too, other worldviews and cultures have rubbed off and the influence of the global village is also felt. Hence, the question now: what is 'traditional'? This and identity are also determined by one's physical location, especially in terms of the rural or urban contexts. Each of these has their own



distinct sub-worldview dimensions that shape identity. Thus, the singular label “African” today is often inadequate; further elaboration or qualification is needed. As stated previously, of course, the parameters for this enquiry in terms of the identity of the core research group have been set at Shona and Ndebele Christians in Zimbabwe who are involved in vocational ministry in an almost exclusively urban context. As the facilitator of the group, I view myself, a Zimbabwean, as a Euro-African Christian involved in urban vocational ministry.

The fourth presupposition noted was that of generational change. George observed that it is said culture changes every 20 years. In today’s global village, change is very rapid. Although change in rural settings is generally slower, the technological revolution is speeding up the process there too. Cell-phones, for example, are becoming increasingly common in the absence of fixed line telecommunications. Television, computers and other “techie” gadgets are readily available – even through solar power – and allow young people especially to familiarise themselves with what is “happening”. New IT technology encourages creativity and innovation. While this change is visibly quicker in the urban context, rural areas are no longer exempt. Solar power and mobile phones are seeing to that. We may also be surprised at some of the older generation accepting such changes, but social, economic and lifestyle demands are insistent. Africa basically missed the Industrial Revolution, but the Communications Revolution is taking hold very strongly. This increasing exposure to alternative ideas and styles of living will form the basis for future social and economic development in ways that are yet to be appreciated. We may well dislike some changes, but change itself is inevitable, wherever we are.

For Joyce, a fifth presupposition is our colonial background. Colonialism (both political and social) has shaped a certain mentality in Africa. The group affirmed the widely perceived notion that colonialism has stifled creativity, innovation and, hence, development in Africa. A sense of inadequacy, inferiority and a fear of offending the superior seem very common. In addition to political and legal actions of the period (for Zimbabwe this was from approximately 1890 to 1980), there was also the parallel aspect of social attitudes. This, of course, affected all strata of society deeply, both consciously and subconsciously. Not surprisingly, colonialism left its mark on the Church: many denominations were racially divided into separate black and white congregations (often along geographical and/or demographic lines according to legal statute). Some denominations only serviced one group. As expected, much of this changed after Independence, but the adjustments were slow, yet unforced. The colonial mind-set also affected administrative systems. For many denominations, the head office functioned like a passive dictator or chief: the “workers” – those called of God – were told what to do and treated as employees. (In this conversation, Beki asked: “Is this colonialistic; did not Tshaka



do this to Mzilikazi? Isn't it better for me to oppress my own brother than a foreigner?" While not excusing colonialism, the point was accepted that such attitudes reflect widespread human tendencies and are not confined to colonial contexts alone. Added George: "We have a fighting spirit, motivated by greed. Accountability is lacking in most of us.")

### 3.2 Our Plan

Next, we briefly looked at Gehman's second step, which is to form a task force, working group or research team. For the purposes of this project, my group of co-researchers constituted the research team. As we have been exploring the issue of administration for some time now, and have reflected on our personal experiences, both individually and collectively, we felt we were able to use these as our field research. Moreover, all of us are involved in some form of ministry leadership and so are responsible for helping others in their walk of faith. This, too, gives us certain insights or perspectives on the task at hand.

As noted above, the team had very little idea of what to do or expect with such an exercise, since none of them had done anything like this before. My thinking was that we would meet together to assess and reflect upon what Scripture has to say about administration and, hopefully, come to some consensus as to what God's perspective and expectations are. As one involved in Practical Theology, I thus had a tentative idea of where we ought to – or, perhaps might – go. But I, too, have not done anything quite like this and so I was a little unsure of just how things would turn out. Although I had an inkling that one day would not be enough, even so I felt it would be sufficient time to at least devise a rough draft. But, other than meeting as a working or research group, I had no fixed ideas or definite expectations. I had circulated a copy of O'Donovan's and Gehman's approaches in advance and did not really expect the team to have any radically different ideas from these. This was confirmed as, in the end, they readily agreed to a combination of them as a methodology.

I also left open how they wanted to research and to frame the theological discourse. Again, they had not given this much thought beforehand and, despite my initial unwillingness to do so (to avoid imposing myself further), I reluctantly proffered the suggestion that one approach would be to follow the five-fold grid we have been discussing all along. (This reluctance was based on the premise that, like Systematics, theologising such concepts is somewhat artificial and arbitrary, since God has not revealed Himself or His plan in such ways. Nevertheless, they are helpful concepts that allow us to break the bigger, somewhat abstract notion of administration into more easily recognisable components.) This, too, was quickly accepted without any question.



Another part of my thinking was the research tools to be used. I had assumed the group – three of them theological graduates – would have some notion of the need for sound investigation and assessment. Thus, I sought to provide a range of tools for their use, ranging from concordances, to various types of dictionaries to lexicons for Hebrew and Greek as well as other works. With hindsight, this may have been somewhat overwhelming. The three college graduates started with some of the semi-technical tools but soon turned, instead, to the concordances. The other two, with no theological training or background in such tools, having been somewhat ‘lost’ at the beginning, quickly followed suit. Not long into the exercise, then, it was evident – despite the training of the former – that the process would be far from academically thorough; that exegetical methods would be disregarded, and a “layman’s approach” would be applied.

### 3.3 Our Research

The third of Gehman’s steps concerns research. Ours centred on the following amalgam of O’Donovan’s three questions and nine steps:

- (a) Identify what the culture says about the issue and why. Define the cultural problem or issue which needs to be resolved
- (b) What does the Bible say on the subject?
- (c) Determine what cultural similarities or differences exist on the issue between the biblical situation and the local situation
- (d) How can we express the truth of the Bible on the subject in a way that is clearly related to African culture?

Since both O’Donovan and Gehman obviously have a different if not larger project or purpose in view, some of their points do not apply in this enquiry. (For instance, since we are not theologising for a specific church or denomination, it is not our purpose here explore what must be done to help ‘your’ people make the necessary changes. Nor are we to decide what strategy a local church could adopt to help people make the needed changes to deal with the problem.)

### 3.4 Our Goals

Next, Gehman proposes setting goals. The group agreed to the following:

- (a) To devise a contextually relevant, Afro-Christian theology of administration
- (b) To explore possible reasons for the gap between belief and praxis and to suggest some tentative solutions
- (c) To develop an enlightened society that will venture out to do the best it can, given this new knowledge



This latter goal, although briefly discussed and accepted by the group, was not really considered in the discussion in any detail.

### 3.5 Our Discussion

#### 3.5.1 *Working Towards a Theology*

Having agreed on the overall methodology, the underlying presuppositions, the basic plan, the research process and the intended goals, the group set out to explore the issues. The following summarises the ensuing discourse:

##### 3.5.1.1 *Time:*

###### *Defining the Problem*

George began: "Time is secondary; relationships are primary."

Dawson: "Culture is not static; as different cultures mix, we need to balance. Neither is inferior or wrong."

Joyce: "The problem is synchronising the two – how can we take care of both, managing time and relationships? We need a dynamic way of doing both together."

George: "When people don't do their homework, they want to look at the past [to use culture as an excuse]; but this is immaterial."

Joyce: "We attended a wedding recently. The tradition is to take the husband and wife after the ceremony to teach them [about intimacy and other dos and don'ts.] But they are tired; we need to think about [the issue of] time."

Dawson: "Teaching is critical. Our approach here is important. Perhaps, by emphasising time, we communicate that events and relationships are less important or inferior. We need to show that we are not despising one at the expense of the other. [You should] build a good house before you tell them their house is bad; they will destroy the bad house themselves."

Beki: "We need to emphasise that both [time and relationships] are important; we need to educate people. We are part of a global village; I need to be globally relevant. When the plane takes off at 2:00 and I'm late, I can't say, 'I'm an African.' [Laughter] We shouldn't use culture as an excuse. [We should be aware of] priorities: when it's important, I'm there."

###### *Determining what the Bible says*

(Note: References are from the *New International Version*. 1985: Zondervan: Grand Rapids unless otherwise stated.)

(The group noted that the issue here is short-term, historical time, not eternity.)

#### **Gen. 1:1-5**



*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day' and darkness he called 'night'. And there was evening and there was morning – the first day.*

The group began with this passage. It was recognised this is the start of time: God separates light and darkness to start time and the first day; everything that happens thereafter thus follows within time. While God is not bound by time, He defines it and His plan operates within it. He is not a haphazard God; He is a planner. He doesn't overlap with His actions; He knows how long He has to do something. He predetermines what He wants to do within time. He arranged six days, each with deliberate actions; each day was allocated for something. Time was broken into segments to accomplish objectives. Now that we have better ways of measuring time [clocks, watches], we can [should be able to] balance our relationships.

Commenting on this, Joyce said: "Seeing the significance of attending an event, we struggle with relationships. We want to achieve things; being results oriented will help us to do it in the context of the time we have. When can you do something? So time becomes the factor." Dawson commented further: "We are not results oriented, so we bow to cultural demands. These over-ride our objectives. Relationships may be ignored when cultural aspects or spiritual matters are involved and take precedence!" He explained that, important as relationships are, if something involves the spirit realm, that supersedes the cultural practice or norm. Joyce added: [As we use our time] "We can't think beyond our own situation and how it might impact others."

### **Eccl 3:1-8**

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear down and a time to build; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance; a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them; a time to embrace and a time to refrain; a time to search and a time to give up; a time to keep and a time to throw away; a time to tear and a time to mend; a time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.*

Significantly, while it was acknowledged that this passage reflects that actions take time, that time must be allocated for them and that there is an appropriate time for each, no-one said anything about worldview implications in the light of our previous discussion about time.

### **2 Tim 4:6-10; Acts 13:36**

*For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept*



*the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for the appearing.*

*For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed.*

On these two passages, Dawson noted: Paul has finished; his time is up. He found the purpose for which God had for him; his 'work' fitted into the time allocated to him. Therefore, he was a good planner; he wasn't lazy. David also did what was expected of and planned for him. Added George: Most of us don't recognise that we have a time frame to do what we have.

The issue of urgency, of completing an assignment was raised in general discussion. This led to comments on Nehemiah who oversaw the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls in 52 days (**Neh. 3:1-6:16**). Beki affirmed that, while, there is no hurry in the rural areas, there is still urgency in that context. That style may not fit the city situation. "It's an Issue of priority," said Beki. "When it's time to plant, everyone is up at 4:00 a.m. They even take food to the fields." George commented that this shows the problem is not about incapability, but knowledge; therefore, it involves education. Dawson also noted: "There is an element of 'What are we hurrying to do?' If there's something else to do, then I will hurry too. The problem is trying to take the rural concept into a different [urban] context. So we must synchronise the two; come to the other's level of understanding. Take them from where they are where they need to be. [In the] rural areas, you must wait. You must 'feel' that we are here; know who is in charge here. That's more important than when something is done." He then pointed out that rural people know the importance of time. "For instance," he said, "take buses. You will never find a rural person missing it!"

Speaking to the use of time and its importance in urban areas where there is punishment through the docking of pay, George noted: "People quickly learn that time has value."

Beki raised another important issue: "We are polite; we can't say 'No' – but that's a question of integrity; we need to teach people about this. Saying no is better than saying yes and then not being committed [to do something]." From a different perspective, Dawson commented on time-keeping in the home. Husbands, he noted, are often frustrated because their wives take inordinate time in getting ready (for example, to go to church). "As African men, we need to come out of our comfort zones and think more about our wives and their needs as we allow them time to prepare." Chris related his own experiences with this, adding: "We need to remember they [the wives] are also thinking about sorting out the kids and the house as well



as themselves. We're just thinking about us." Joyce laughed, giving her husband a sly look as if to say, 'Yes – watch out.'

### 3.5.1.2 *Organising:*

#### *Defining the Problem*

Interestingly, there was very little discussion on this topic. Dawson more or less quashed it: "This is more of a skills problem," he suggested. However, further discussion highlighted some difficulties.

#### *Determining what the Bible says*

George identified Jesus, in feeding the crowds and breaking them into groups (**Matt. 14:13-21; 15:32-39; Mk. 6:30-44; 8:1-10; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:5-13**) as examples of organisation. Likewise, Jethro prompted his son-in-law, Moses, to delegate (**Ex. 18:13-27**). Commenting on this, Dawson observed, "Spiritual maturity and insight comes before the [demonstration of the] skill. He referred to Paul's advice about caring for widows (**1 Tim. 5:3-16**) as another example of being organised. "[You should] always organise to meet a need," he said.

Picking up on this, Beki pointed to the choice of the first deacons (**Acts 6:1-8**) to illustrate the importance of workable structures. "We need to be flexible enough to put a structure in place to meet a need. Conflict often highlights a need; this leads to organising, which, in turn, leads to growth [and the] sharpening of skills." But, he added, "A poor organiser sees that as a threat." To which George suggested: "We should arrange 'organised conflict' to motivate [people]." He then alluded to Joseph's organising Egypt during a drought (**Gen. 41:41-57**).

In further discussion, it was felt that the element of organising in the Church is generally satisfactory at present, although growth always leads to greater needs and challenges; hence, we need to be prepared. Of course, a critical question here – as previously observed – is, what is 'satisfactory'?

Beki then introduced a different tack. "Jesus was a chief strategist: He organised the 12 for a purpose; He had a goal; He was investing His life in the ministry. He did a good job in organising them toward a goal. [So, we] need to define ourselves, our vision our goals. We shouldn't do something just for the sake of doing it. We should be focused." To which Dawson added, "This isn't easy. Look at Peter [disowning Jesus, **Matt. 26:69-75; Mk. 14:66-72; Lk. 22:55-62; Jn. 18:16-18, 25-27**] and doubting Thomas (**Jn. 20:24-29**). It's difficult."

Joyce then suggested another example of organisation as seen in the [Mosaic] Law, especially its social dimension that allows people to live in harmony. To which Dawson added the setting of tents around the Tabernacle in a particular order (**Num. 2:1-34**).

### 3.5.1.3 *Leading:*

#### *Defining the Problem*

This section of the conversation was the longest and became rather animated in places. George began: “Some are born leaders. Even cows lead – and some lead like cows! [Laughter] The issue is how do we lead and why. We deal with the troublesome ones that lead others astray. [But] we must lead everyone; [we] have to be creative as leaders. [We] need to communicate.”

I then suggested that a fundamental set of problems can be seen in the leadership crisis, both at national and church levels, in terms of quantity and quality. To this, George commented: “Qualitatively, young leaders need educating, pruning,” to which Joyce added: “We need development of leadership. We are living the same way we did way back, but things have changed. Situations call us to different ways of leading.” Why? I asked. George proffered a suggestion: “Colonialism – we weren’t encouraged to do so. [We were ‘taught’] if I speak, I might be crushed down – so my bright ideas die.”

“There is a shortage of naturally skilled leaders,” Dawson said. “Also,” he asked, “are our objectives right and clear? [President Robert] Mugabe is a good leader: he has taken the nation in his direction, but not necessarily where the nation should go. [It is the] wrong direction; he has failed the nation. Either they have ulterior motives or different objectives.”

So how does this apply in the Church context? I asked. Answered Dawson: “We have the Scriptures. If my motives take me to this manual, then I have good leadership. For the Church, I feel that sometimes we work very hard on something God has not ordained. And we waste time and effort. Leadership under God is by calling and anointing. My understanding is that these are the enablement; skills then sharpen. The ability to lead is calling and anointing. We have many well-meaning pastors who are there by default. They can be there for either good or bad motives. This then produces what I am.” Joyce chipped in: “The anointing and calling was upon Moses, but the revelation came to Jethro.” “That’s why Jethro couldn’t do the job that Moses was supposed to do,” replied Dawson. “He sharpened – or trained – Moses.”

Picking up from his secular business experience, George commented: “In business, if you put a C.A. [Chartered Accountant], a marketer and an engineer together, they will all fight for their interests, but put an MBA [Masters in Business Administration] in there and he can bring them all together. That’s the right mix of leadership skill.”



Next, Joyce observed: “There’s also a crisis in administration even among those who are called and anointed.” Both Dawson and George agreed. “But,” said Dawson, “we need to be very careful on the analysis. We shouldn’t make the mistake of trying to correct this from one angle. If we go for the skills and training but forget the spiritual [element], then we’ll miss it. It is God who puts one up and puts one down (**1 Sam. 2:6,7; Ps. 75:7**). Not everyone can do this; that’s why the fivefold ministry [This refers to the five gifts mentioned in **Eph. 4:11**, which some take to be specified offices within the Church] is so important. Pastors come by calling; elders are by appointment. It’s very difficult to get these [five] guys.”

Beki raised yet another area of concern: “The issue of servant leadership (**Matt. 20:25-28; Mk, 10:35-45**) is looked down upon in today’s Churches. We look to the chieftainship approach: we want more power, wealth and so on. There’s no [sense of] serving the Church or God. Instead of serving the people, many leaders want to be served. This is duplication of worldly leadership. It’s a privilege to be part of what God is doing; to be called. There was nothing superior in me that led Him to choose me. As Church leaders, we have missed God’s rule of servant leadership. Jesus washing the disciples’ feet (**Jn. 13:1-17**) is missed today. [They say], ‘I am the man of God, I need to drive the latest car, have a beautiful house, fly out of the country to attend the latest conference ...’” George nodded in agreement, “Servant leadership comes through being sharpened.”

So, what is the cultural problem? I interjected. Joyce offered: “When you have a leadership that is not questioned, you end up with problems.” Dawson responded: “This comes from our background – we can’t question the spirits. The chieftainship must align with the spiritual dynasty. This leads to superiority and runs away from servant leadership.” Beki suggested another view: “Some push people into the deep unknowingly. Sometimes, the people empower the leader so that he ends up being a dictator. A Christian leader should know the extent of their calling; don’t allow people to just promote you. This is the wrong motive.” Dawson added, “When people lift you up and you don’t say anything, that’s a problem.” Beki came back with yet another possibility: “There’s also the issue of excellence and success. Look at John the Baptist. He didn’t try to be a ‘little Christ’; he was humble. But today, we don’t have that attitude; as soon as we encourage someone, they want to rush off to do their own thing. But it’s God who promotes people.”

#### *Determining what the Bible says*

Despite having the most discussion about the topic of leadership, interestingly there was not a concomitant Scriptural input.



Beki pointed to Paul's example, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (**1 Cor. 11:1**) A leader is one who takes instructions. But, sometimes, we lose sight of that. We lead without recognising the Chief Shepherd and try to take the glory."

Dawson quoted **Heb. 7:7, 17** "And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. ... For it is declared: 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.'" Speaking of the authority to lead, he then quoted Prime Minister Tony Blair, "When the people have chosen a leader, they must let him lead." Said Dawson, "When God appoints us into leadership, He lets us lead; but our people want to control us; they don't always *let* us lead. The people must also submit to the Chief Shepherd; then they will submit to the Pastor. In the family, the woman ought to submit to her husband as he ought to submit to his Master."

George had a different perspective again: "When God wants to do something new, He always bears a child; He raises up the right one." He pointed to Joseph in Egypt and Samuel (**Gen. 39:1-6a; 41:41-57; 1 Sam. 1:9-20**).

Beki then asked, "What are the signs of a true leader?" He answered his own question: "When he gets his instructions from God. Look at Moses on the mountain [with God] versus Aaron with the people (**Ex. 19:1-25; 32:1-35**). Dawson followed up: "God always works through leaders. The demonic world is well organised. Satan's kingdom is well organised. When something is organised, the objectives will be achieved faster and easier. In a team, there will always be a visionary; the others should submit to him. We shouldn't wait for the congregation to tell us what to do."

#### 3.5.1.4 *Planning:*

##### *Defining the Problem*

Beki jumped in: "The future isn't certain, so we don't bother or see it [planning] as important. The grandmother cannot just rush off and buy things for the new baby because something may happen before it's born. [The attitude in preparing] sermons [is]: 'Ah, we'll see [what to say]; as the Spirit leads.' The situation can change, so putting things in black and white is problematic."

Joyce countered, "Isn't this because of fear, rather than flexibility?" George proffered an answer: "People say, 'Why plan, when God might change things?' But we don't know what God may or may not do, so we need to play our part and prepare."

Joyce suggested another possibility: "Is there also a fear of success?" Responded George: "If you succeed, but the community leader doesn't, you are challenging him and his leadership; eventually he will have to step down. So, you strengthen yourself with witchcraft." Tongue-in-



cheek, I chipped in, “But I’m anointed!” “So, [that means] you are challenging the leader who isn’t ‘anointed.’” “Yes,” continued Joyce, “So we are afraid of success.” Dawson agreed, “[There’s] jealousy [and] envy. Also there’s a fear of failing.”

Beki touched on a deeper aspect: “I feel uncomfortable when someone asks me what I’m doing; I feel threatened. [I think] ‘He thinks I’m not doing a good job; he wants a successor.’ [So] I don’t want to tell others in case they destroy me.”

George picked up on another sensitive aspect: “Black employers don’t employ whites because they feel threatened about succession. Added Beki, “Ndebeles have a problem: When a person is an MD [managing director], it’s difficult to employ a relative [because of fear and suspicion]. [But] for the Shona, all the relatives are included; there’s a plan for the future. For the Ndebeles, we see it as a threat. [It’s] the fear of the unknown; my relative may do something [such as] witchcraft [because of] jealousy.” Dawson interjected: “Familiar spirits are not keen on success – especially if it is from witchcraft. Therefore, the wife or children are never told [what he is doing].”

#### *Determining what the Bible says*

Dawson, picking up on earlier comments, avowed: “People assume that you know what you’re supposed to do, so they keep quiet [and don’t ask about planning issues].”

As a Scriptural illustration of wise and unwise planning, Joyce mentioned the 12 virgins (**Matt. 25:1-13**). “Those who hadn’t prepared properly missed out.” Beki added the parables of the house on the sand and counting the cost (**Matt. 7:24-27; Lk. 6:47-49**). George reminded us of the principles in Proverbs: Man can plan, but God brings it to pass (**Prov. 16:9; 19:21; 20:24**; see also **Job 42:2**). Another example of God’s intentional planning and design was noted with the building of the Tabernacle (**Ex. 26:15-30; 35:20-38:31**) and, later, the Temple (**1 Chron. 22:2-16; 28:1-18**).

Chris noted **Gen 1 and 2** where Creation unfolds progressively, putting everything in place for mankind – the last to be created – to live and feel secure.

Nehemiah, Dawson pointed out, prayed before he went to Jerusalem, obtained letters from the King and, once there, surveyed the city and determined the strategy and what was needed (**Neh. 1:4-11; 2:7-9, 11-16**).

George stressed the need for education and discipleship to overcome some of the cultural blockages affecting people’s understanding of this area. He narrated his experience of learning from his (secular) managers and his resultant promotions. But, because of political philosophy of the day, this was frowned upon and he had several difficulties to work through.



Joyce ventured another sensitive question: “Would we have done the same thing (for a black person)?” Dawson, in responding to George, commented, “We have seen highly educated Christians acting carnal. We need to give them more of the character of Christ than education *per se*.” Then, to Joyce he said, “Yes, but blacks don’t often support each other. We also need to develop a love and commitment to each other.” George quickly interjected: “That leaves our Christianity questionable.” To which Dawson replied, “We are battling our inferiority complex. I’ll respond positively to a white because my mind-set is [that] he is superior, but to a fellow black brother, I’m not quite so enthusiastic.”

By way of application, the group then affirmed that, as a Christian is in Christ, they can do everything through faith in Him (**Phil. 4:13**), so the fear, envy and jealousy can go. We need to get alongside one another to help [with these issues]; we need to help young Christians to grow in this area (of Biblical education). There is need to teach against jealousy and envy as well on forgiveness. It is important to give practical examples. The spiritual problems always manifest themselves in the physical. We often see the fruit, rather than roots; so we should not be responding to what we see or hear on the surface. The larger part of the minister’s responsibility is to seek God’s insight and His anointing for that message. Under the anointing, the Holy Spirit will do his work; the minister’s job is not just to preach but to pray.

#### 3.5.1.5 *Controlling:*

##### *Defining the Problem*

Dawson opened this discussion: “Control is not a bad word, depending on the motive. If things are done properly, that’s OK; you do it for the sake of order. If it’s done with jealousy or envy, then your controlling system leads you to excessive control of others.”

Beki picked up the issue of supervision: “This is a problem. Look at your typical CV: you have a job description, [you] are evaluated, [you] have to report back. This can be seen as invasion of privacy. Why not just trust me to do my job? [This is particularly bad with] younger people in senior positions [who] have problems with older people. They are labelled *mafikizolo* [an upstart, a new-comer]. ‘Who is he; how did he get to this position? Can we take him seriously?’”

Following on, Joyce observed, “We try to keep our position by controlling others. We control through oppression. There is a fear of [losing] my power, position and prestige. We should allow people to develop and grow.”

George added, “This goes along with knowing all the activities needing to be done. These expectations then need to be communicated to those concerned. When you keep the



conditions to yourself, and try to shoot down those who question you, you will have problems. Communicate your expectations to make it enjoyable; educate the people about the organisation's goals and direction."

#### *Determining what the Bible says*

Significantly, there was not much Scriptural input on this topic. Beki first highlighted the aspect of delegation (**Ex. 18:13-26**) with Moses. "The attitude that, 'I am THE leader; I'm supposed to do the job' is unbiblical and unhealthy. Then there's also [the problem of] discipline. As leaders we shun disciplining people; we don't see it as a means of growth. As Africans, we avoid discipline – because of fear of confrontation. But Kingdom values are at stake."

Dawson agreed: "It's hard, so we tend to delay. Public discipline, especially, is very difficult. We are accused of protecting the person, while we are getting the facts, getting them prepared for restoration."

George suggested a *modus operandi*: "The Pastor counsels, then the Elders facilitate the discipline process. Those who are disciplined often turn out to be very good Christians."

Dawson mentioned, importantly, that discipline should be done in love, not in hatred or anger. Discipline is often misunderstood: 'Hand them over to Satan!' we hear. But what does this mean anyway? Often this is viewed as excommunication (taken from **1 Cor. 5:1-11** – the advanced stage), but there is still the goal of restoration. And there is **1 Tim. 5:19, 20** about not rebuking an elder. Beki added that **Gal. 6:1** also directs us in our approach and attitude to this often awkward subject, while Joyce reminded us that discipline is not a joy but is necessary (**Heb. 12:5-11**). In the course of comments about people leaving a congregation or denomination before the discipline process is complete and thus transferring the problem elsewhere, I suggested that perhaps transfer letters should be encouraged between denominations and not just within selected churches. At this stage, I was beginning to wonder if anyone in the group would say anything about the standard text on discipline when Beki referred to **Matt. 18:15-17**. I took the opportunity to point out that this passage is itself a process beginning with the personal level as outlined in **Matt. 5:23, 24**, the two forming a 'disciplinary cycle'.

#### 3.5.2 So What Does Our Afro-Christian Theology of Administration Look Like?

But, out of all this discussion, what have we produced? Can we summarise these insights into a general statement that reflects a theological understanding of and approach to administration that is true to Scripture, to African (specifically, Shona and Ndebele) culture and

to the task of administration? In short, are we able to articulate now – albeit tentatively and from a limited Shona and Ndebele perspective – an Afro-Christian theology of administration?

Since there was insufficient time to do this part of the exercise at the end of the workshop, I circulated copies of the dialogue to the group and asked them to reflect on it, suggest any changes and then draft their own theological statement. Although this was not ideal – it would have been better to do it as a group session – it allowed them to articulate their theology in a way they are comfortable with. Five of the group responded. As would be expected in such an exercise, they each focused slightly differently on what they perceived to be the issues and each expressed these differently. Nevertheless, given our various discourses, I believe they would all agree with the essence of what the others have said. There are clear similarities, repetitions and nuances of worldview in all the statements. It is also apparent that our workshop dialogue not only helped them to reflect on the Scriptural basis of administration but, in some cases, also allowed them to articulate more coherently.

Thus, to begin with, George stressed the aspect of time. Said he, “Time is God-ordained as He created [things] in the frame of time. He honours and respects it. Time is a highly perishable commodity and, to be done, all things must compete for it. There is an opportunity cost to everything you do as it will be at the expense of other things you would then not do. It can easily be wasted. [While] we are concerned with the event and relationships, time must be [seen as] important. Our not being conscious of time has made us lag behind in development. If we would honour time as God does, we would be more like Him [and] we would do what is expected of us when, where and at the right time. It is true that time waits for no man.”

Dawson agreed and went on to suggest more: “Every human being exists within a culture, and it is that culture that shapes the understanding and behaviour of men. Thank God culture is dynamic; otherwise we may be bound in practices that lose meaning in this globalised village. Time is critical in administration, while relationships are equally important in our everyday life. Good administration must seek to pull both ends together, through education and training, so that neither one is over-emphasised at the expense of the other.

“God being the master planner set the theology of administration very well by creating time for us (since He exists outside time). He created the heavens, earth and all that there is in a specific time frame, finished it all, and said, ‘it is very good.’ Within that work schedule, He had enough time for rest (**Gen. 1 & 2**). Paul was able to plan and work within his time frame and also finished well (**2 Tim. 4:6-10**). We can, too.



“Administration can never exist in a vacuum or on one person – hence the difficulties attached to it. It involves other people, other factors in life and projects or work assignments to be done. Therefore, a combination of God’s calling and anointing, teaching and training of the leader himself, and teaching and training of the other people he operates with will be the only way to effect the desired goals in administration.”

Beki, reflecting his Evangelical stance, proffered the following rather comprehensive statement: “[An Afro-Christian theology] is an administration process that seeks to glorify God both in planning and implementation without compromising the sovereignty of God and human dignity (*imago dei*). It is [an] administration that values Scripture (both the Old and New Testaments) as the final authority for conduct and belief. It is an administration empowered by the Holy Spirit. That is, the administrator depends more on the Holy Spirit than his or her abilities and skills. It is an administration that values *ubuntu* – thus ‘*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*’, which, as an Ndebele proverb is equivalent to, ‘*I am because we are.*’ It is [an] administration process that recognises we are dealing with human beings, not machines, so relationships and valuing of human life supersedes production. The management team in an organisation should be concerned about the welfare of its workforce.

“It is an administration that is conscious of culture and worldview. For example, in Ndebele and Shona culture, going to bury one’s relative is more important than a company executive meeting. [Or again,] workers are reluctant to allow a fellow worker to use their car, office or computer because of [the] fear of witchcraft. It is an administration that is globally relevant, that places value on time management, planning and goals. It is an administration that emphasises competence, efficiency, job descriptions, supervision and evaluation.”

Also replicating the five-fold grid of our conversations, Chris and Joyce jointly proposed the following: “We need to change (evolve/develop) and be more creative in the way we handle time management and relationships in the achievement of specific tasks before us, as exemplified in Genesis.

“As a Christian community, everything we do and the way we do it ought to reflect the kind of God we serve and worship. Time management and relationships should be held in balance. There is a time for everything (**Eccl. 3**).

“Without proper organisation, we are unable to meet needs effectively and efficiently (**Matt. 14:13-21; 15:32-29; Mk. 6:30-44; 8:1-10; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:5-13; 1 Tim. 5:3-16; Acts 6:1-8**).



“Leadership is the main issue that has much to do with style and motive. Whether born a leader or groomed into it, one must bear the marks of a servant with the chief aim of pleasing God (**Matt. 20:25-28; Mk. 10:35-45**). The sense of calling and anointing is crucial as it guides and enables the leader to serve his Master without fear or favour of man.

“Planning takes into account the desired results without ignoring the details of how to achieve those results. Man can plan, but God brings it to pass (**Prov. 16:9; 19:21; 20:24; Neh. 1:4-11; 2:7-9, 11-16**). As Christians, we can do everything through faith in Christ (Phil. 4:13).

“Controlling is a method which creates an environment that is characterised by order and stability. It ought to create room for growth and development of the people involved. It should also be a means of maintaining standards of excellence, discipline and accountability.”

### 3.5.3 *Why Does Our “Theology” Not Match Our Praxis?*

After the theologising discourse – and still as part of the workshop session – we then probed the second question relating theology to practice.

If, as Christians with a working knowledge of Scripture, we should be in a position to reflect some theology regarding our faith, why is it, apparently, that we so often fail to link that understanding with the way(s) we do administrative tasks? For instance, if Scripture exhorts us to steward our time wisely (**Ps. 90:12; Rom. 14:12; Eph. 5:15, 16**), why do we not do so? If Scripture calls us to work in ways that honour God (**Matt. 5:16; Eph. 6:6, 7**), why do we continue to do things in slipshod ways that bring chaos and confusion, create umpteen repeated problems and, if we are honest, bring God and His Kingdom into dishonour and disrepute? In other words, why is there such a chasm between faith and practice? Is it merely a matter of not bothering to do what Scripture exhorts us to do? Or is it, in some cases, a matter of ignorance? Our exploration thus far would suggest it is more substantive than this.

Perhaps the classic example in Africa of this conundrum – both in terms of its extent and the embarrassment – is the Rwandan genocide of 1994. When a nation that has known the Gospel for 150 years and claims to be 80% Christianised, butchers 800 000 people in 100 days, some serious questions have to be asked about the internalisation of the Gospel. And particularly since pastors were themselves involved in the killing! Similarly, but perhaps not quite so dramatically, the same question applies to all theologising that does not result in practice or behaviour that honours God. This relates, of course, just as much to our praxis of administration.

Our discourse on this enigma was insightful.



George opened the discussion: “Many people have certificates on their walls, but they don’t put the knowledge into practice. We have developed the habit of wanting certificates. Soon after Independence, with affirmative action, young, inexperienced managers with paper qualifications were given heavy perks but couldn’t do the job. That’s when our economy started going down. The youngsters began writing reports about their seniors who were coaching them; they were fired, leaving the youngsters – without the experience – to do the job.” “Yes, added Joyce, “[There was a] crisis of expectations.”

Dawson took it further: “The 70’s-80s saw rising Pentecostalism. In grappling with the issues of culture, especially those that clash with the Biblical culture, we didn’t have the leaders to help us make the transition from syncretism to solid Christianity. We are not dealing with African issues.”

Noted Beki, “It’s a journey to take someone into discipleship with Jesus Christ. It’s part of pastoral work. It’s not easy to help people reconcile the Gospel with ‘real life’. We see people going to Church in the morning and to Vaspostori [the prophets] or the *n’anga* at night. Perhaps what we’re preaching is not adequate. We need to think seriously about our preaching. Are we being contextual? Are we wrestling with daily issues? That’s why we see double standards.”

To which Dawson asked: “Who is pastoring who, here? When the big leader (for example, Guti, Sengwayo and so on) is genuinely anointed, we need to follow him. When I am succeeding, I may forget that my anointing comes from somewhere. Then I lean on a false pillar – [that’s] dangerous. Paul preached Christ crucified, the power of God. But we have deviated from spiritual giftings toward education. Many churches have little impact now because we have left the Biblical approach to ministry. We went off to get our degrees. But there is no impact. Until we connect properly, we can sit, we can talk, we can read books, but we will have no real results.”

George raised another dynamic: “Most of us fall short in our prayer life. If we analysed ourselves, how many times this week have we prayed alone? We are busy for the Owner of the ministry, but are we connected to Him?”

For Chris, it is different: “The key is discipleship. Here is we see discipline and accountability. You can’t have a leader who says he’s not following anyone. Who is checking on you? Who are you answerable to? Look at Jesus: we are who we are today because He spent three years discipling them [the disciples].



George concluded: "Zeal without knowledge is dangerous. We must be sold out to Jesus. Then we can impact the world."

#### **4. Reflections**

As we examine these discourses, we note, first, that the theologising exercise was not completed because of inadequate planning and time, as the one-off workshop was insufficient to do justice to the task. Moreover, it is unpolished and imperfect. Initially, at the end of workshop, I was very discouraged because I felt the group had not accomplished what I expected. I had hoped the task would be 'finished'. After some reflection, however, it dawned on me that I had prompted and participated in exactly what Dyrness (1992, p. 31) advocates: a non-technical, non-professional expression, through stories of personal experience and interaction with Scripture, leading to a practical, theological expression of administration. Furthermore, I also realised that, in line with Gehman's suggested methodology, this is a process and not an event. I came to understand, rather, that this exercise is simply the beginning. It remains to be continued, therefore, and refined with further reflection, discourse and narratives by whoever wishes to take it up. This may be a starting point; perhaps, even, a foundation upon which others may build. That said, however, I was also disappointed that there was not more deliberate effort at sound exegesis.

Second, the discourses revealed two interesting dynamics. On the one hand, the theologising process – as informal and unpretentious as it was – rested almost entirely on each participant's knowledge of and ability to recall Scripture. Favourite or well-known passages were presented, rather than a methodical, progressive search through Scripture. Nor was there sound exegesis and, on occasion, the hermeneutic may be questionable. As noted earlier, though, three of the group have had no such training. Nevertheless, the others could have led the way. The result, then, was less than I had hoped. On the other hand, significantly, it was clear that, although these passages were familiar, the participants had not deliberately before now considered them in the context of administration in the way we have been discussing it for this enquiry. As such, this particular dialogue helped them to link the concept to the Scriptures more intentionally and to appreciate their relevance in deeper ways.

Third, this particular discourse – perhaps more than the others – helped the group to identify not only deeper worldview issues not previously considered, but also to connect the related problems to Scriptural principles about administration. Therefore, it was interesting that, in the process of theologising, the group wrestled more meaningfully with their worldview. This highlights the interconnectedness and, in turn, will assist us further as we seek to develop contextually appropriate courses for teaching administration (the topic for Chapter Eight.)



The second question we addressed queried possible reasons for the incongruity between a perceived 'theology' of administration (however rudimentary that may be) and one's actual praxis in approaching the various tasks in this endeavour. The group concluded that education *per se* is not a panacea. Rather, it is a faulty (or, perhaps, incomplete?) Gospel, together with a failure to link it adequately with real life issues for black Africa, that has caused the breach between theology and praxis. This is exacerbated by a general dearth of sound discipleship. Deep worldview issues such as fear, suspicion and jealousy have not been addressed adequately through the Gospel. In the case of administration, the stewardship of time, as well as some issues of leadership and control, have not been appropriately linked to the broader purposes of the Gospel and its impact upon them has thus been minimal.

In wrapping up this particular discourse, it may be worth commenting that the theologising process could have been strengthened by reference to, and interaction with, other theological disciplines – Systematics, Biblical, Black and African, for instance – not only to 'position' the texts and the process, but also to relate these deliberately to Practical Theology with particular reference to the African context. However, Imasogie's (1983: 26-27) comment is apposite here. In calling for a new theological approach more suited to this context, he divides traditional theologians into three groups:

Each of the [first] two groups of theologians starts with the basic presupposition that all theologies are contextually conditioned. In view of this, one of the groups contends that the failure of traditional theology lies in its inability to reconcile the basic Christian message with the contemporary self-understanding of human existence. This inability is the result of presuppositions that leave no room for the possibility of a new mode of human self-understanding. The other group attributes the irrelevance of traditional theology in meeting the needs of the oppressed to its *de facto* identification of Christianity with the *status quo*. [The third group relates to the quasi-scientific worldview underlying the traditional Western theological approach.]

## 5. Conclusion

Having explored the nature of administration as well as some Shona and Ndebele worldview dynamics, we then sought to craft a tentative contextual theology and have now reached a natural denouement in our enquiry. It remains, then, to summarise the issues identified, to present some suggested solutions and, in that process, to propose some preliminary course outlines or syllabi for contextually relevant training in administration for Christian ministry. This is the goal for Chapter Eight.