

CHAPTER 3: ASPECTS OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SPIRITUALITY: THE CHEWA PEOPLE OF ZAMBIA.

3.1. Introduction.

This chapter explores the role of the Chewa spirits of the Eastern Province in Zambia. More importantly, the spirit-possession phenomena in Chipata will be discussed. This sheds some light onto the role played by the ancestral spirits in the life of the Chewa people. The extent of the influence of Chewa spirits in the social, economic, and spiritual life in Chipata is looked into. This chapter, therefore, presents an analysis of Chewa spirituality or religious beliefs. Writing about Chewa theology in Malawi, James Amanze (2002:131) points out that Chewa theology overwhelmingly “emphasizes the survival of the human species here and now by attaining good health, a good supply of rain, fertility of the land, many children and the like.” African traditional spirituality as an African heritage must be taken seriously for a fuller understanding of African Christian spirituality, particularly of the African Pentecostal churches.

The traditional spiritual beliefs of the Chewa people of Zambia, for example, are human-centered and socially oriented. The same can be said of the African Pentecostal churches’ spirituality. Delores Williams wrote about black spiritual churches in America describing their overwhelming emphasis upon the life and efficacy of the spirit which emanates from the concept of God as spirit (1993:221). African Pentecostal Churches are not an exception. The need to explore the prevailing religious belief patterns of the African becomes mandatory in any serious study of African Pentecostal spirituality. Such a study reveals the socio-cultural and economic composition of the local people and their prevailing spiritual beliefs. These help a great deal in understanding the preferences of the new Christian communities of faith founded by the local people.



3.2. Some aspects of the Chewa cosmology.

Bourdillon, writing on the cosmology and society of the Shona in Zimbabwe, depends on a definition which refers to the ways different peoples in different cultures understand the world of their experience (1991:220). It should be said right from the beginning that although there is an attempt in this section to deal with the Chewa Cosmology, the Chewa society today presents a heterogeneous religious situation. Hence, the need to handle this subject carefully.

3.2.1. Ancestral spirits (Midzimu Yamakolo).

It is a common fundamental belief among the Chewa that the existence of a person continues after death; he or she becomes a spiritual being and acquires characteristics of immortality and eternity. According to Scott (1892:415) “the ancestral spirits are the spirits of the departed who were once alive and are now dead. These are known as azimu (spirits). The Chewa believe that the spirits of their dead relatives survive physical death and remain alive. At death, the spirit leaves the body and flies away like wind or air and becomes god-like and goes to live in the spirit world.” And according to Murphree (1969:32) “the spirit...transforms into an ancestor, taking its place in the spiritual hierarchy of the ancestors.” The belief in spirits and a spirit world is as widespread in Zambia as elsewhere in Africa. John Mbiti (1969:75) makes a distinction between two broad categories of spirits, namely, those which were created by God as such, and those which were once human beings. By and large, most African ancestral spirits belong to the latter category.

Among the Chewa, according to James Amanze (2002:146) the ancestral spirits not only protect “their people from dangers such as disease, droughts, famine and witchcraft; but also they punish people when they break traditional moral norms.” When descendants perform appropriate ritual ceremonies and through them, the Azimu will perpetuate their contacts

with the living through dreams, visions or by means of spirit possession of which only the diviner can give an authoritative interpretation. As Bourdillon (1976:227) postulates, once settled back into the community, the ancestral spirit is regarded as a friendly guardian to the family that survives him. These spirit guardians, asserts Bourdillon, “have power over the lives of their descendants. They are also responsible for bringing the family group together on ritual occasions and ensure that harmony prevails at family level.” Traditionally, Africans hold that to experience good health, prosperity and success in life one needs to be subordinate to, and venerate the ancestral spirits. Thus sickness implies an imbalance between the metaphysical and the human world that is disturbing the expected normal flow of life (Mbiti, 1975:134).

The ancestors are without question the most prominent aspect of African religion, in fact, they are the heart of the African spirit world. In his book, *The living dead and the living God,* Klaus Nurnberger (2007: 37) says that “Effective authority must be existentially present. The authority of the most proximate ancestors is present. Everything of existential importance is present.” According to Klaus, ‘distance does not exist between the most proximate of the deceased and the living in terms of space and time, but only in terms of authority and power.’ For many people ancestors are a reality to be given due acknowledgement, providing for felt needs, the benevolent guardians and protectors of people. But the African Pentecostal churches confront and reject traditional beliefs about the “ancestors”, because they believe that these ancestors are not really ancestors, but demons which need to be exorcised.

3.2.2. Tribal spirits (Midzimu Yamitundu).

In order to understand the tribal spirits, one has to know the role of royal (chiefs’) graves in the religious system of the Chewa. According to James Amanze (2002:166) “the chief...is, for all practical purposes, a ritual figure since his or her ancestral spirits are considered as the supernatural guardians of the land and the village group or territorial group depends, to a

large extent, on his good will.” James further notes that a chief never dies, but continues to rule his people in this world through his successor. The deceased chief, it is believed, becomes even more powerful in the spirit world than when he was on earth. Therefore, when the tribe is facing natural disaster, appeals are brought to this chief as one among many in a long chain or hierarchy of intermediaries whose position is to intercede before God on behalf of the tribe or people (2002:167). Hence, our theology should start taking into account the traditional beliefs and modify these beliefs. On this basis, the church should show the people that “Jesus , who is our chief high priest, is the only mediator before God.” (Hebrews 5:1-10).

3.2.3. God (Mulungu).

Mulungu emerges as the Creator, the source of life, and the giver of rain and sun, the one who has been in existence before creation (Van Breugel, 2001:29). In his Doctoral Thesis entitled: “*Heart of Darkness*” (2005: 93), Arnold Maurits Meiring agrees with Van Breugel and asserts that “African religion teaches that God exists, and that this God created all things... is eternal, all knowing, and ubiquitous...beyond description.” The Chewa people deeply acknowledge the existence of one supreme God, Mulungu. He is understood, among the Chewa people, as the creator of the cosmos. James N. Amanze (2002:135-141) lists some of the Chewa names for God: Mulungu (sometimes also attributes of God as Mulungu); Chiuta (the supreme power); Namalenga (the creator of the universe) and Mphambe (the lightning). Although omnipotent, Mulungu is not worshipped directly as is done by Christians. The Chewa people turn to tribal spirits “as special agencies through which God, Mulungu, can be approached.” (James N. Amanze, 2002:146). It should be noted also that although the same name, Mulungu is used for the Christian God, it does not imply the same thing. The Chewa traditional Mulungu is not as universal and as approachable as the Christian Mulungu. Nevertheless, according to James N. Amanze (2002:130), this Chewa God, Mulungu “is not un in heaven. but here on earth among his



people, his presence being manifested in the day to day concerns of human life in the world of nature.”

3.2.4. Spirits (Midzimu).

Mbiti (1969:79) writes, “As for the origin of spirits, there is no clear information what African peoples say or think about it.” Most, if not all, including the Chewa people, believe the spirits always existed, and they are omnipresent, very much a part of the world. People project these spirits into their natural surroundings. These spirits could include nature spirits, spirits under the control of malicious sorcerers and witches, and spirits that come from outside a person’s particular ethnic lineage; sometimes seen as avenging spirits (Mbiti, 1969:80). David Barrett (1968: 119) in his his study of African societies notes that “the belief in ancestral spirits is predominant in almost all African societies mainly as an expression of family and clan continuity and solidarity. These ancestral spirits exercise control over the living and all life exists under their surveillance.” He observes that “the ancestral spirits are treated with awe, fear, reverence, respect and veneration.” Their influence penetrates almost every sphere of life. Therefore, many spirits are feared, and so people go to diviners or medicine-men (ng’anga) to seek protection from them. In this section we will consider few spirits.

3.2.4.1. Evil spirits (Midzimu Yoipa).

Among the Chewa people, the spirits of witches are supposed never to acquire the status of ancestral spirits since being an ancestral spirit is, in itself, a sign of moral superiority, and witches and sorcerers are believed to be evil persons by nature, hence they become evil spirits (Mizimu yoipa). Witches and sorcerers who die are said to be wandering around homeless and to change into dangerous animals like hyenas (James N. Amanze, 2002:144). Daneel (1971:161) states that hereditary witches have evil spirits in their blood which they cannot get rid of. Such witches cannot live without bewitching others.

3.2.4.2. Good spirits (Midzimu Yabwino).

Among the Chewa people, good spirits are those which are directly concerned with the welfare of the living. They act as guardian angels, being active in the day to day activities of their people. Mbiti (1969:83) states that good spirits “are guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities.” It is commonly believed that the good spirits of good people live in the spirit world in which Chauta (Mulungu) is King. It is said that the spirits of good people return to the physical world or reincarnate in the form of harmless snakes (Njoka) (James N. Amanze, 2002:144). Geoffrey Parrinder (1967:22) states that the snake has had a fascination for people in every land. It is mysterious, fearful and immortal. It is regarded as immortal, because it sheds its skin, yet it continues to live. Parrinder further points out that a snake with its tail in its mouth, apparently swallowing itself yet with no beginning or end like a circle and sphere, is symbolic of eternity. This concept of eternity is the basis of Chewa spirituality.

3.2.4.3. Angry spirits (Midzimu Yokwiya).

The other spirits among the Chewa people are angry spirits. Crawford (1967:88) describes angry spirits as spirits with a grudge and bent on vengeance. There are four types of angry spirits according to Gelfand (1962:162). These include the spirit of a murdered person; the spirit of a servant who has not been paid for his services or a person from whom something was taken or borrowed and not returned; the spirit of a husband or wife who died in an unhappy state of mind over a matter of deep concern; and finally, the spirit of a parent, especially a mother who was ill-treated by the children.

These spirits will seek amends and payments for the injustice from the guilty parties. The Chewa people believe that an angry spirit can cause very serious quarrels within a family, misfortune, and loss of property, wealth or life. (James N. Amanze, 2002:143; Mbiti,



1969:84). Bourdillon (1976:234) concludes by saying that “the fear of making a spirit angry can act as a sanction for ethical behaviour ensuring social harmony.”

3.2.4.4. Alien spirits (Midzimu Yachilendo).

Alien spirits form another class of spirits found among the Chewa people. They are the spirits of non-members of the lineage such as white people, or even animal spirits. These spirits can confer to their hosts particular skills for divination, hunting etc. They may, however, also be associated with activities such as witchcraft. While they may choose their host, they may also be given to a person by a previous owner or may be inherited from an ancestor (Crawford, 1967:86).

3.3. Chewa understanding of spirit possession.

Spirit possession is a frequent phenomenon in African societies because it is seen as an affective means of communication between the visible world of human beings and the invisible world of spiritual beings. Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth (1969: 36), in their book entitled: *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, say that “For the African, the world of spirits is a real world...It is the spiritual beings which actually control the world; indeed, the world is a spiritual arena in which the various categories of spiritual beings display their powers. Man, in particular, is entirely dependent upon these spiritual beings.” According to Maureen Wilkenson (1991:231), “spirit possession is a cultural term which gives expression to the belief that a person who displays certain behaviour has been taken possession of by an invisible being or power.”

In Zambia, spirit possession is understood literally by the Chewa people as “Kugwidwa” or “Kulowedwa ndi azimu”, meaning seized by the ancestral spirits who fall upon or enter them. Among the Chewa people of Zambia, as with many other African peoples, the desire of an ancestor spirit to possess someone is usually to convey significant messages to people, and this is signalled by a lengthy illness (Daneel 1971:100). Mbiti (1969:82) says that spirit

possession is not always to be feared, and there are times, he argues, when it is not only desirable, but people induce it by special dancing and drumming until the person concerned experiences spirit possession, during which he or she may even collapse. According to Daneel, the shaking and grunting noises during dancing and the beating of drums herald the onset of possession.

In spirit possession and illness, the assistance of the diviner or medicine man/woman is often necessary in order to find out which spirit of the living dead it is and what it may demand. And according to Mbiti (1975:120) “if a living dead makes demands which can be fulfilled, people normally meet them. But if the demands are impossible, other ways of keeping the living dead quiet are sought through the medicine man/woman or diviner.” Mbiti further says that “sometimes the spirits of those who died away from their homes, or ...were not properly buried, may demand ritual transfer to their home compound or reburial of their remains.” The family may then discuss their problems with the possessed medium; for they are actually talking with the ancestors (1971:119).

The onset of this trance is accompanied by trembling, rolling of eyes, falling down in fits, after which the medium begins to speak with the “voice” of the ancestors (G. ter Haar, 1992:130-131). After the trance is over, the person (medium) returns to normal. The people enquiring of the medium are thereafter to carry out the instructions of the ancestor as interpreted by the medium.

3.4. Witchcraft and magic among the Chewa.

Traditionally, Africans believe in the mystical power of magic and witchcraft. According to Van Breugel (2001:211) “Belief in witchcraft is deeply rooted in the mentality of the Chewa people, and ... it continues to influence their behaviour.” M.G. Marwick (1965) made a study of sorcery (magic) and witchcraft with reference to the particular social setting of the Chewa matrilineal society. He pointed out how witchcraft is related to social conflicts inherent in that particular system. According to Mbiti (1969:198-199) “Magic is generally



considered 'good magic' or 'evil magic'." And he says that "the use of good magic is accepted and esteemed by society." It is chiefly the specialists, and particularly the medicine-men (ng'anga) who use this mystical power for the welfare of their community. Good magic is used in treating diseases, in counteracting misfortunes, and in warding off or diluting or destroying evil "power" or witchcraft. But evil magic, Mbiti argues, involves the belief in and practice of tapping and using the power to bring harm to human beings or their property.

'Witchcraft' is a term used to describe all sorts of evil employment of mystical power, generally in a secret fashion. Therefore, a witch, according to Van Breugel (2002:214) "is a person who kills people in order to eat human flesh." And, E.G. Parrinder in his book, *African Traditional Religion*, (1974:126) points out that the "idea of witches eating human flesh is fairly widespread in Africa, but ... it is clear that what is meant is some sort of spiritual eating."

Individuals who use magic are called "sorcerers". Sorcerers are people who cause harm to the community by using destructive "medicine" and other harmful substances (Maboea S.I., 2002:21). Van Breugel agrees with Maboea saying that sorcerers "have weapons with which they can kill at a distance" (2001:225). By their witchcraft and magic beliefs, the Chewa people attempt to explain suffering by referring to evil in man and projecting it on to a witch or sorcerer (Van Breugel, 2001:228). The witch is the personification of evil in man. The experience of evil caused by men leads to a belief in mysterious evil-doers as the explanation of much of the suffering and misfortune. This has made people to look for protection against and salvation from this power of evil (Mbiti, 1969:169).

3.5. Different dimensions of sickness as experienced in traditional African culture.

In African traditional culture, death, suffering, misfortunes, diseases and accidents are mysteriously caused as far as African peoples are concerned. Among the Chewa people, sickness and death are rarely due to natural causes, but due to spirits or enemies.

3.5.1. Physical

Physical sickness is one of the dimensions of sicknesses experienced in traditional African life. For example, paralysis, dumbness, blindness, etc., are physical sicknesses which, among the Chewa people, are seen as mysterious.

3.5.2. Social

Social sicknesses such as barrenness, staying unmarried, etc, are experienced in traditional African life. Barrenness, for example, could cause strife, humiliation, and break marriage. And, according to Mbiti (1969:200) “sorcery is a social sickness because people hate sorcerers.”

3.5.3. Spiritual

Spiritually, a curse is one of the dimensions of sicknesses experienced and considered among Africans as a spell that causes failures in life, e.g. being unemployed, unmarried, etc., (Mbiti, 1969:190). According to Mbiti (1969:155,197) a curse is greatly feared in many African Societies, and it is believed to bring death to the person concerned. Sometimes curses are evil words spoken or sent to a person from a distance. Mbiti further asserts that “most of the curses are within family circles. The operative principle is that only a person of a higher status can effectively curse one of a lower status, but not vice versa.” He believes that the “most feared curses are those pronounced by parents ... and the worst is the curse uttered at the death-bed, for once the pronouncer of the curse has died, it is practically impossible to revoke it.” (1969:211).

3.5.4. Magical

This is a sickness which is believed to have been caused as a result of your enemies who practise sorcery or magic. Pauw (1975:12-27) defines magic as “a belief in mystical

impersonal forces which are compulsively manipulated.” The belief is found in most, if not all, African societies that there are invisible, mystical forces and powers in the universe which certain human beings have knowledge of, and the ability of how to tap, control and use these forces for evil. Magic, according to Mbiti (1975:165), “is believed to be these forces in the hands of certain individuals” who “may use magic for harmful ends.” Barrenness, or lack of a partner in marriage, for example, are some of the magical sicknesses which are sent from a distance by sorcery (Mbiti, 1969:197).

In Zambia, and many other parts of Africa, when something goes wrong in the welfare of the individual or his/her family, he/she immediately wonders who has caused this misfortune. In most cases he/she will suspect that someone is responsible for this evil magic, sorcery or witchcraft against him/her or his/her household, animals and fields. Chewa people in Zambia, like other people in other parts of Africa, believe that sorcery, witchcraft and evil magic cause misfortune and death. Therefore, when someone has died, people often try to find out who used sorcery, witchcraft or magic against the dead person. In the African context, someone is often blamed for the misfortune or death; and in some cases the suspect may be beaten to death, or asked to leave or be thrown out of the village. Relatives of the deceased may also take types of revenge which are less open.

3.6. Chewa traditional healers and healing methods.

By the nature of their profession, Chewa traditional healers (ng’anga) are respected and consulted for their ability and effective methods of treating diseases. Lucinda Domoko Manda, has written a chapter on ‘Africa’s Healing Wisdom’, in a book entitled: *Persons in Community* (2008: 125-138) in which she ‘investigates the value of African traditional healthcare practices and systems by exploring how the traditional African worldview, its ethics and healthcare practices, serve women in search of social, spiritual and physical healing.’

3.6.1. Traditional healers (ng'angas).

In this section, I will deal with who the ng'angas are, their calling, training, and their duties.

3.6.1.1. The medicine men/women.

The medicine men/women (sing'angas) are persons who use herbal medicines to cure diseases. They carry out the work of healing the sick and putting things right when they go wrong. The knowledge and skill which they have acquired through training has been passed down through the generations. And since in every homestead and every village people fall sick or meet with misfortunes, medicine men/women are considered to be extremely important. They are the ones who come to the rescue of the individual in matters of health and general welfare. According to Mbiti (1969:166) these medicine men/women, “are the greatest gift to African societies and the most helpful and useful.” James N. Amanze says that “Chewa traditional healers have prophetic powers which they use to determine the cause of a particular disease. And after having determined the cause of a disease under a believed spiritual inspiration from the ancestors, ng'angas decide what type of medicine the patient should take in order to effect healing.” (2002:29).

3.6.1.2. Their calling and training.

Mbiti (1969:166-7) says that “there is no fixed rule that governs the calling of someone to become a medicine-man/woman. This may come, asserts Mbiti, when one is young and unmarried, or in her/his middle or later life. And most, if not all, medicine-men/women believe that the ancestral spirits “called” them to this profession through dreams, visions or in waking.

Usually, the training of medicine-men/women comes after their “calling”. According to Mbiti, medicine-men/women, “must undergo formal or informal training” (1969:167).

Among the Chewa, like any other tribe in Africa, the training is long, expensive, and the process is a complex one. Their training involves learning a new language, communicating with spirits, learning certain prayers, singing professional songs, dancing and the necessary exercises for inducing spirit possession (Mbiti, 1975:157). When, the training is over, the candidates are, in some societies, formally and publicly initiated into the profession of medicine-men/women, so that everyone may recognize them and their qualifications (James N. Amanze, 2002:42; cf Mbiti, 1969:167).

3.6.1.3. Their duties in the community.

The duties of the medicine-men/women, according to Mbiti (1969:168), “are many and varied, and overlap with those of other specialists.” Some of the duties the medicine-men/women carry out, are to provide to the families or individuals protective as well as healing medicines. Mbiti goes on to say that it is the duty of the medicine-men/women to purge witches, detect sorcery, and remove curses and control the spirits and the living-dead (ancestors). Medicine-men/women also have access to the forces of nature and other forms of knowledge unknown or little known by the public (1969:170).

Daneel (1971:143-144) describes the medicine-men/women as “the well-known champions in matters affecting the basis of Africans. Specialists who prescribe remedies for diseases that affect the community.” According to Daneel, “their position is mostly acknowledged for their ability to normalise situations involving magical power in a community.” (1971:143-144).

3.6.2 Traditional healing methods.

African culture and tradition define good health in terms of a healthy body and fulfilment of the rules and rituals expected of human beings. It is believed that “health depends on being in harmony with the spiritual powers.” (Maboea. 2002:11). In some cases, if not all, the

traditional healer (ng'anga) may instruct the patient to perform “sacrificial rituals to the ancestors” (Van Breugel, 2001:87-92).

3.6.2.1. Exorcism.

One of the functions of a ng'anga is to determine the identity of and exorcise “evil spirits”. These “evil spirits” in the traditional understanding could include nature spirits, spirits under the control of malicious sorcerers, and spirits which come from outside a person's particular tribe or lineage. If a person is possessed by a spirit that is causing danger to the family and the community; then the spirit must be exorcised from the person. Exorcism, according to Mbiti, takes place when ritual ceremonies conducted by the ng'anga are arranged for the express purpose of “driving away the notorious spirits which ‘endanger’ a village or the life of the individual.” (Mbiti, 1969:82).

3.6.2.2. Divination.

Divination, according to Mbiti, is the link between the physical and the spiritual worlds, making it a religious activity. And the diviner is the one who fulfils the role of intermediary between the human world and spiritual world for the community. He further says that “divination enables human beings to contact the ancestors.” (1969:160-178). The role of the diviner among the Chewa people is extremely important, according to Van Breugel, because the diviner is the official interpreter of the will of the ancestral spirits. (2001:244). Mönning (1955:80-81) has the following to say about methods used by diviners:

“Various methods of divination are used...The most common method is that which uses divination bones. This is, in fact, also the principal method since, even when other methods of divination are used, they will usually be preceded or concluded by consultation with the bones. Usually consulting the divination bones is considered sufficient.”

Diviners normally work as medicine men/women. According to Mbiti (1975:156), these diviners “deal with the question...why something has gone wrong. They tell who may have worked the evil magic, sorcery or witchcraft against the sick or the barren.” Mbiti adds that these diviners have the ability to “find out which spirit may be troubling a possessed person, what it wants and what should be done to stop the trouble.” Divination is still widely practised throughout Africa. It is intimately associated with the ancestors, since diviners are believed to be possessed by ancestors. These diviners serve many purposes in the African communities (Shorter, 1985:8).

There is a growing recognition among churches in Africa in general, and African theologians in particular, that the problems taken to diviners, whether they relate to witchcraft, evil spirits, barrenness, etc, should be recognised and responded to. In the African Pentecostal churches, divination is opposed as ancestral worship and being demonic.

3.6.2.3. Tattooing.

Tattoos (nembo) are marks that remain permanently after cutting a person’s skin with a razor for the purpose of applying medicines for protection and healing. These ritual tattoos are done by the medicine-men/women, ng’angas, who perform this ritual on the person seeking either protection or healing. Tattoos are done on the face, neck, hand, knees, varying in sizes and shapes according to the demands made by the ancestral spirits through the ng’anga (Mbiti, 1969:175). According to Van Breugel, a person who is afraid of poisoning or being killed by lightning (thrown by the enemy) will ask the ng’anga for mankhwala (medicine) to protect him. This mtsiliko (protection) often takes the form of mankhwala which has to be rubbed into cuts in the skin (otemera) (2001:249-250).

3.6.2.4. Appeasement.

Among the Chewa people, the ritual to appease the ancestors is a strong belief. If it is found by the ng'anga (medicine-man/woman), that the illness or bad luck has been caused by ancestral spirits, the ng'anga will advise the sufferer that appeasement of the ancestors is the only solution to the unfortunate situation (James N. Amanze, 2002:117-118). Sundkler (1961:21) believes that “the power the ancestors have over the people compels the people to appease the ancestors for their prosperity.” And Africans have a strong belief that appeasement of the ancestors guarantees a good relationship with them, which ensures good health, success, and prosperity. Failure to appease the ancestors could result into misfortune upon the people, such as a poor harvest, illness, theft or unemployment (Mbiti, 1969:82; cf Maboea S.I., 2001:63).

3.7. The attitude and response of Christianity to the African worldview.

Christianity should acknowledge the importance of the ancestors and spirit-possession in many societies, both in rural and urban areas. In their relationship with the ancestors, people experience very real problems. Perplexing dreams, the withholding of protective powers, the unpredictability and possible spite of the ancestors, and the often devastating effects of spirit-possession - all these and many more problems plague everyday existence. These are issues that Christianity has often overlooked, particularly in its western forms.

In many African initiated churches, the ancestor cult is accommodated and allowance is made for the intervention and communication with ancestors. But, in African Pentecostal churches, the ancestor cult is confronted, and rejected as demonic, a custom from which people need deliverance. Western Christianity also rejected the African traditional rituals, but for a different reason: they saw these practices as ignorant superstitions to be totally eradicated (James N. Amanze, 2002:191). James N. Amanze argues that “missionaries were determined to plant a pure Christian faith which was free of pagan elements. There was no

room for the indigenization of Christianity. It was feared that such a move, would lead to syncretism...which is explicitly forbidden in the Bible” (2002:196). Christianity necessarily, properly, and ceaselessly adjusts to cultures. In the process of achieving these adjustments, erroneous decisions can be and have been made. Such errors in accommodation lead to a major missionary problem, which is syncretism.

Syncretism has been defined by Alan R. Tippett (1975:17) “as the union of two opposite forces, beliefs, systems or tenets so that the united form is a new thing, neither one nor the other.” Tippett mentions two kinds of mixtures that might be called syncretism. One mixture involves the distortion of Christian teaching by mixing it with non-Christian myth. And the second mixture involves the singing of Western, Calvinistic theology in an unfamiliar chant to a drumbeat previously used for a pagan dance. These two mixtures are different and the difference led Tippett to use the term, “Christopaganism” for the first mixture. McGavran (1974:45-49) points to deism as an example of the improper adjustment of Christianity to culture. The deist culture placed the laws of life and world in first place. Deism did not so much ban God as it relegated him to an absentee deity who had created the world and left it in control of natural law. The laws, not God, governed the world. Miracles were impossible. And prayer was meditation influencing only the one who prayed.

In attempting to adjust Christianity to deist culture, McGavran declares, the adjustments all but destroyed the biblical faith. He further points out that:

“under the guise of adjusting Christianity to a rational culture, theologians and leaders of these segments of the church gave birth to a new syncretistic religion. They still called it Christianity. It used the old familiar words. It met in church houses and listened to robed choirs. It sang hymns and employed ministers trained in seminaries which devoted themselves to hastening the adjustment to deistic culture. It looked very like Christianity - but it radically disbelieved the Bible, had very little faith in the resurrection of our Lord and had little power. It converted few sinners. In America, it maintained itself by proselytizing out of the orthodox churches Christians whose faith had grown cold. It emphasized ethics -

partly because righteousness was the one component of the pure faith in which it still believed, and partly because, having lost the vertical dimension, it had to compensate by stressing the horizontal. Missiologists do not have to go abroad to observe the tragic futility of syncretism” (1974:45-49) (italics mine).

In his book, *Constructing Local Theologies*, Schreier (1985:151), says that Christianity has “a long history of absorbing elements from the cultures in which it has lived.” And so, African Pentecostalism may be judged “syncretistic” because these churches have absorbed African cultural elements. From the point of view of the African Pentecostal churches themselves, however, they exist precisely because the mainline churches founded by Western mission are “syncretistic”, having absorbed centuries of Western cultural and religious symbolism into their forms of Christianity which are often not very meaningful in an African context. Theology should, therefore, be contextualized in order for it to have meaning in the lives of local people. Kofi Appiah-Kubi (1983:viii) succinctly puts it as follows:

“That the Gospel has come to remain in Africa cannot be denied, but now our theological reflections must be addressed to the real contextual African situations. Our question must not be what Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, or any other Karl has to say, but rather what God would have us do in our living concrete condition.”

Western theologians have written a lot of theological books; but, it is imperative for us, Africans, to think about the relevance of these theological books to church life. Because theology is relevant when it not only answers the questions, but also brings solutions from the context in which it is done. There is nothing that makes the Word of God more relevant than a proper understanding of the language and culture of a people. Daneel (1990:227), however, has proposed that the correct Christian response should be to “confront those beliefs [in wizardry] with the message of the one scapegoat, Christ, and exorcise the invading spirits as part of the solution to the tradition-based problem, despite the risk of

misinterpretation.” This demonstrates a more relevant approach than that which dismisses the spirit-world as ignorant superstition, which never penetrates the real problems in popular African experience.

Therefore, a demonstration of God’s power through the Holy Spirit will convince African people that God is indeed more powerful than the ancestral spirits and the surrounding evil forces; and therefore, God is worthy of worship, honour and service. Without the Holy Spirit in this milieu, people will easily revert to the religion of the ancestors, which was more “powerful” than the sterile, rational Christianity which, according to Mbiti (1969:3), “is active once a week, either on Sunday or Friday, while the rest of the week is virtually empty.”

3.8. The need to develop a holistic African theology.

The need to develop an African theology that takes into consideration the dynamics of cultural context and reflects the experiences of African Pentecostal churches in order to build the identity of African churches is critical.

For a long time now, African churches have been doing theology embodied in European culture. This is mainly because the gospel was intrinsically inherent in the culture of missionaries who brought Christianity to Africa. So much so that when African people received the gospel, they received it together with the European culture. In *Theology Cooked in an African Pot*, Klans Fiedler (1998:142) comments that when Christianity arrived in Africa:

“...it came with a western wrapping. Christianity went into the pot without being unwrapped. There was no period of observation first. But the pot...was not quite empty. Some of what was there was pushed out, some remained and was included in the stew...Africans want the meal, but not the indigestible wrapping which should not have been included. To some extent, the meat has not been cooked properly because it is still sealed in the wrapping”

The above comment reveals a great deal regarding the situation of theology in the African context. In other words, the theology which came from outside of Africa, and was in haste put into an African pot, did not pass into the hands of indigenous Africans for modification first, in order to suit the intentions of the pot. It came into the African pot, without realizing that the dynamics of the African pot are totally different to that of the Western pot. Furthermore, most African food is still cooked on the traditional three stones. This should not be mistaken to mean wastage of energy, but rather a transformational place for the hermeneutic inquiry and participation between the cook, the fire maker, and those enjoying the warmth of the fire. This is the reality that the western pot missed, and will continue to miss.

Theology in Africa should not accept the dichotomizing of spirit and body as two different realities. The African worldview is holistic; body and soul are indivisible. This indivisibility which forms the African worldview is also in accordance with the biblical worldview. And Newbigin's response to the dualism between the thinking mind and the world of things extended in space, as propagated by Descartes' *res cogitans and res extensa*, is helpful. Newbigin states that the early church had to overcome this dualism:

“It could do so because the starting point of its thinking was in *the Bible, where this dualism is absent*. It formulated its rejection of the dualism in the statement that the one God was the creator of both the visible and invisible realities. So long as this dualism remains part of popular thought, it is impossible for the gospel to be accepted as public truth; it can only be private opinion.” (1995: 37) (Italics mine).

It must be remembered that spirit and body form a unity of the diversity, and as such the spiritual and physical needs of a person are inseparable.

African theology, therefore, needs to take into consideration the African cultural context, its language, hymns (and songs as messages). The effort to develop and reformulate African Theology depends heavily upon African theologians and how they understand the African Religion which, according to Du Toit (1998:390) “...gives access to African lifestyles,

myths and narratives, practices and rites, and the broad oral tradition.” Africans should be themselves advocates of theology cooked in the African pot which aims to serve God through meeting the needs of the people, especially the underprivileged in both rural and urban centres. Doing theology in this way will make life meaningful to African people since their spirituality will get in touch with the realities of the people. Reverend Chuba, a Zambian minister with the United Church of Zambia, comes up with a helpful article as a conclusion in *Theology cooked in an African pot*, Klans Fieldler (1998:60) saying that:

“Africans need a theology that will redeem them from the give me, teach me, and lead me mentality, especially at this stage of an independent Africa. That theology which is not cooked or at least not boiling in an African pot has its abode in an African pit.”

There is need also to remember that Africans did not just observe and receive the foreignness of Christianity during the colonial era when missionaries were associated with imperialism. Africans initiated efforts at developing a theology which suited the African cultural context, language and spirituality. Klans Fieldler (1998:62) observes that “there is a general agreement among African theologians that African Independent Churches have taken a daring step of contextualizing or indigenizing the Church in Africa. Consequently, they have produced a relevant theology for Africa. They have also succeeded in producing a ritual-oriented church which appeals to the deep seated emotions of African peoples and thus satisfying their spirituality.”

Therefore, in doing and developing theology, the African Pentecostal churches have repudiated ancestral worship, divination and sacrifices as demonic; but have included a number of good cultural aspects, without necessarily compromising the gospel. Much of what is happening in these African Pentecostal churches may not be known because the African theologians are not doing much to publish theology. But the time has come for African theologians to do more in terms of documenting African theology in order to build up a profile of the African Pentecostal churches and their identity.

3.9. Conclusion.

In conclusion, African traditional religion appears, from a Christian perspective, to be inadequate on several fronts: the Supreme Being seems often distant and unfathomable, the ancestors appear sometimes fickle and unpredictable, and the diviners (ng'angas) seem limited by the ever present fear of a power that might be greater than their own. In African life, the departed are not readily forgotten, though there may be taboos against mentioning their names in certain places. Through rituals, dreams, visions, possessions and names they are recalled and respected. This does not and cannot mean that they are worshipped according to African traditional religion. The departed are considered to be still alive, and people show by these African beliefs and practices that they recognize the presence of the living dead (ancestors). In this way, African religion appears realistic, since nobody wants to be forgotten by his/her family immediately after dying.

Therefore, the solutions offered by African traditional religion, at least from this Christian viewpoint, seem to be seldom completely satisfying, and may leave people feeling uncertain, threatened and fearful. African problems caused by a loss of power and life through the malicious working of sorcery, magic and witchcraft, and through capricious spirits who often demand more than people are able to provide, demand a truly African Christian solution.



CHAPTER 4: AFRICAN PENTECOSTALISM IN ZAMBIA.

4.1. Introduction.

Researchers of Christianity today are increasingly recognizing the role of a rapidly growing movement, here referred to as “new Pentecostal churches”, which has sprung up since the seventies, but is fast becoming a major expression of Christianity on the continent, especially in Africa’s cities and towns. Since the 1980’s these churches have emerged all over Africa, where they tend to have a younger and more educated leadership and membership, including young professionals (Walls&Shenk, 2000:132-135). Their services are usually emotional, enthusiastic and loud, especially as most make use of electronic musical instruments.

In this thesis, the “new Pentecostal churches” are referred to as “African Pentecostal churches”. My use of the term “African Pentecostal churches” is exclusively narrow in its definition, and totally different from “African Independent/Pentecostal” or “Zion/Apostolic” in the general sense of the word. But, when I use the term “African Pentecostal churches”, I exclusively refer to African Pentecostal churches in this thesis, which share a historical background with the mainline Protestant churches. These African Pentecostal Churches do not allow ancestral worship, they have a solid biblical foundation and are theologically sound and balanced.

These African Pentecostal churches are increasing in popularity with educated people who continue to give financial support and feel that their needs are met there (Gifford,1992:24). According to Gifford (1998:3340, these “newer churches”, which I have referred to as “African Pentecostal churches” in this study, are totally different, from “African Initiated churches”. He argues that “the newer churches, though they depend on primal conceptions

like deliverance, do not represent a return to the past, or a bridge to traditional culture, in the way the 'African Initiated churches' did. They are harshly negative concerning much of Africa's traditional culture, not just polygamy and (in Zambia) practices like the 'cleansing' of widows." He further argues that these newer churches "repudiate the veneration of ancestors...attacking 'spiritual' churches...rejecting all the ritual candles, blessed water, white cloths, drumming, sacrifices - that have been associated with the AICs. Miracles are performed without instrumentality. All their props are modern and sophisticated. Their language tends to be English...and their music is western."

Gifford, continues to say that the theology of these "newer churches" is essentially the Faith Gospel, and argues that "it is natural that the Faith Gospel should be so prevalent, because Africa's traditional religions were focused on material realities." (1998:334-5). According to Peel (1993:98), in the nineteenth century Crowther wrote of the Yoruba religious in search of "peace, health, children and money". And Daneel (1987:46), who agrees with Peel, writes in his book, *Quest for Belonging*, that "this preoccupation has been noted several times since". Westernized mainline Christianity does not cater for this, therefore it is perfectly natural that the African Pentecostal Christianity which does, fares so well in African contexts.

African Pentecostalism should be placed within its global context because Pentecostal mission has been extremely successful when we look at the statistics. Whatever reservations some might have with regard to the calculations and estimations of David Barrett and Todd Johnson (1988:25-26), there is no denying the fact that the Pentecostal movement is the fastest growing section of Christianity, one of the most remarkable occurrences in church history.

David Barrett and Todd Johnson estimate that there were 74 million 'Pentecostals /Charismatics' (6% of the world's Christian population) in 1970. But, by 1998, after 28 years, this figure reached 461 million or 25%. Barrett and Johnson further project that according to present trends "the figure is likely to rise to 740 million or 28% of the Christian

world total by 2025.” Pentecostalism today is fundamentally and dominantly a Third World phenomenon (Land, 1993:21). In recent years the greatest increases in the Pentecostal movement have been in Africa, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. This phenomenal growth has been so significant that Cox (1996:83) speaks of Pentecostalism as a manifestation of the “unanticipated reappearance of primal spirituality in our time”. African Pentecostalism, as defined in this thesis, is undoubtedly one of the most vigorous and fastest growing movements in Zambia, as it is in other parts of Africa. Although there are some difficulties with regard to statistics such as those given by Barrett and Johnson, they still remain indicative of a worldwide trend and Zambia is no exception to this.

Therefore, the emergence and growth of these African Pentecostal churches indicate that there are unresolved questions facing the church in Africa, such as the role of “success” and “prosperity” in God’s economy, enjoying God and his gift, including healing and material provision; and the holistic dimension of “salvation” which is meaningful in African context.

4.2. A brief historical background to the formation.

Historically, what motivated the formation of these African Pentecostal churches was the desire to reform the existing mainline [Protestant] churches and make them more relevant in order to meet the needs of daily African life. When this reform or renewal within failed or reached an impasse, the result was the formation of African Pentecostal churches. The fact is that these Pentecostal churches did not emerge in a historical or social vacuum. They were conditioned by a number of factors ranging from **spiritual, cultural, political, social and circumstantial factors**. The Pentecostals were first taken note of in the 1970s and, in the 1980s Pentecostalism had a dramatic impact on the lives of the people. The movement came like a flash, it was derided, but once it had established a firm foothold it captured its own oppressors and scorners. As a result, groups from the mainline churches broke off to form “African churches”. David Barrett (1968:161-162), a missiologist, argues that

“independency reflects a rebellion against a Christianity that had become ‘over-Europeanised’.”

Mbiti (1969:233) states that “a fundamental cause which perhaps is not easily evident, is that mission Christianity has not penetrated sufficiently deep into African religiosity.” In discussing the encounter between the New Testament eschatology and the African traditional concepts, John Mbiti (1971:151-155) mentions the necessity of the gospel message to penetrate into the African world view. He argues that “the African Inland Mission failed to penetrate into the African world view, and the failure involved both the fidelity to culture and fidelity to divine revelation.” He states that “the African Inland Mission’s teaching failed to discern between sorcery and shamanism, and also failed to articulate the total spirit world in New Testament terms.” Mbiti says the following concerning the Akamba world view:

“...the final result of the Christian message in a society such as the Akamba is to transpose the tribal spirit world into the Christian one. Akamba life is so deeply rooted in the spirit world that, until Christianity can penetrate that far, it will for a long time remain on the surface, incapable of providing a radical and all-embracing meaning to the total Weltanschauung of the people. This applies as well to many African societies, since evidence shows great similarities between their concepts of the spirit world and those of the Akamba” (1971:155).

Therefore, in dealing with the New Testament eschatology in connection with the African worldview, Mbiti does not stress the “already” dimension of eschatology in terms of present-power for the African who must cope with the spirit world. He affirms the “already” sense of the Kingdom’s coming, along with the “not yet”, but he does not apply this truth to the African context (1971:49). The New Testament account of the Kingdom’s breaking through in power in salvation history, defeating and destroying the powers of this world and manifesting that victory in terms of healing and exorcism is acknowledged by Mbiti (1971:140-141). But Mbiti makes no connections with the contemporary needs in the

African's encounter with the spirit world. This has remained and is presented only in terms of dogma, or a doctrine to be believed.

In his extensive research on African Pentecostal/Independency movements, Barrett investigates the causes of Pentecostal/Independency movements in Africa, emphasizing the sociological and ecclesiastical dimensions in the clash between the Western mission and the African traditional societies. His research concerning the root causes of these movements reflects the social level of his investigation:

“The root cause common to the entire movement of independency, therefore, may be seen in this one aspect of culture clash: a failure in sensitivity, the failure of missions at one small point to demonstrate consistently the fullness of the biblical concept of love as sensitive understanding towards others as equals, the failure to study or understand African society, religion and psychology in any depth, together with a dawning African perception from the vernacular scriptures of the catastrophic nature of this failure and of the urgent necessity to remedy it in order that Christianity might survive on African soil.” (Barrett, 1968:156).

These may account for the formation of “African Pentecostal churches” but, they should not be considered as underlying causes, as they presuppose the existence of other deeper factors.

4.3. The birth of the ministry/church.

African Pentecostal churches are initiated and instituted by Africans and not by western missionaries. After secession from mission churches, these churches are established for the purpose of meeting the “physical, emotional and spiritual needs of people in the third world, offering solutions to life's problems and ways to cope in a threatening and hostile world” (Anderson and Samuel,1993:32).These churches were born or founded in innovative mission initiatives unprecedented in the history of mission, motivated by a compelling need to preach and even more significantly, to experience a new message of the power of the Spirit.

Harvey Cox (1995:219) suggests two vitally important underlying factors, which he finds in Pentecostal churches, that “for any religion to grow in today’s world, it must possess two capabilities. First, it must be able to include and transform at least certain elements of pre-existing religion which still retain a strong grip on the cultural subconscious. Secondly, it must also equip people to live in rapidly changing societies.”

4.4. The urban African Pentecostal Church.

The phenomenon of mass urbanization in Africa results in African Pentecostal churches providing places of spiritual security and personal communities for people unsettled by rapid social change. Shorter (1990:148) in his book, *The church in the African city*, contends that “the Christian task in Africa is the evangelization of a continent in the process of rapid urbanization...If the Gospel of Christ makes a lasting impact in Africa, it will be because it has helped the urban process to become less invidious and less unjust, more human and more enduringly creative. It will have given the African town a soul.”

4.4.1. The membership.

In most, if not all African Pentecostal churches, membership is through faith in Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord. According to Hunter Kent (1994:177), “the growth pattern of any church is measured by its members.” The emphasis in African Pentecostal churches is on “conversion growth” not “biological growth” nor “transfer growth”, as the main means of increasing membership through evangelism. Ruth has argued however that “to guarantee...salvation and continued membership in the community of the saved, the convert must ensure, through his thoughts and deeds, that [he] is a fitting vessel for the ‘infilling’ of the Holy Spirit, which will provide...strength and protection to ward off the multitude of evil forces which seek to possess him. Christ must be invited “in” (1998:285). After the

conversion experience, the convert undergoes baptism by immersion which entitles the convert to all the rights and privileges of a full member.

4.4.2. Liturgy and worship.

Throughout the world, Pentecostals are noted for their exuberant, enthusiastic, experience-oriented Christianity; and African Pentecostals in Zambia are no exception. In fact, the African roots of Pentecostalism suggest that in many respects, the characteristics by which Pentecostals are known are more acceptable in any African cultural setting than they are in any Western setting.

4.4.2.1. Music and dancing.

The worship of African Pentecostal churches is truly African in character, and their members find that they are not only Christians, but African Christians. Singing is authentically African, with local lyrics, music and instruments. Regarding the authenticity of African music, Donald Fraser, a Church of Scotland missionary in Africa, at one point was concerned with regard to foreign music:

“Why should African musical have its songs of praise given in a music which is entirely foreign? While all the village life is full of tuneful African music, why should not the gospel not only use idiomatic vernacular for its proclamation but also idiomatic African music?” (1926: 447).

Joyful singing is often accompanied by ecstatic dancing and clapping. African Pentecostal churches have led the way in developing “a culturally relevant liturgy” into Christian worship which has become “a strong growth factor” (C. Peter Wagner, 1986:99-100). The incorporation of dance into worship services is perhaps one of the most distinctive Africanizations in the African Pentecostal churches. Harvey Cox quoting Appiah Kubi (1995:248) states that “as for dancing in the church, which nearly all the other denominations discourage, they argue that the Psalms also endorse ‘dancing before the

Lord,' and that King David danced before the Ark of the Covenant.” According to Oosthuizen (1979:21), “the chief purpose of dancing is to express gratitude, praise and joy in the presence of God; it has a cathartic value and strengthens a person spiritually.” And Harvey Cox says that “their worship exhibits all the features of Pentecostal spirituality” (1995:246). Therefore meaningful songs, rhythmic accompaniment, dance and other forms of spiritual expression play a significant role in the rooting of the Christian faith in the African soil.

4.4.2.2. Uniform and church decorum.

African Pentecostals do not generally wear uniforms, although there are some who do. In most Pentecostal churches, for example, women are expected to wear head covering in church services; make-up and jewellery are often frowned upon, and men are to wear a jacket and a tie. But my own observation in Grace Outreach Ministries International and Bible Gospel Church in Africa, is that these rules have been considerably relaxed, and a great number of men come to services in clothes according to the event or weather, while the women are usually elegantly dressed in modern clothes, some with make-up and jewellery.

In African Pentecostal churches, churches are beautified with flowers and curtains of different colours. These curtains can be changed on a monthly basis. In most of these churches, the praise-team or the choir is allowed to put on a uniform. Ushers wear badges for the express purpose of being identified by visitors. During the services, some pastors wear gowns. If Holy Communion is observed then those who serve Holy Communion will be dressed in accordance with the event (usually in white and red).

4.4.2.3. Services in African Pentecostal churches.

There are noticeable similarities and differences between the liturgy of African Pentecostal churches and the mainline reformed churches, although similarities are marginal.

Pentecostal and mainline churches usually have only one service, which is on Sunday. Services in African Pentecostal churches usually last for three or more hours. According to my own observation, the Sunday service centres around three main items. Firstly, praise and worship, secondly, the word and, last but not the least, the altar call. In African Pentecostal services, there is considerable audience participation in the worship (C. Peter Wagner, 1986:104). A newcomer [visitor] will be struck by the way everyone participates through praise songs, choir and group items, testimonies and prayer. The prayer offered by the Pentecostal worshippers is usually spontaneous, simultaneous and uninhibited.

In these services, you will find a praise and worship music group who usually lead the congregation in worshipping and singing - until the pastor comes to the front either to exhort, pray, or to preach. C. Peter Wagner has observed that “one of the first things you notice when you go into a Pentecostal worship is that people seem to be enjoying themselves” (1986:99-100). In these services, people sing and dance to the rhythm of the music, swaying from side to side while ululating, clapping etc. Secondly, in these services, the preaching of the word by the pastor is very important and emphatic. Preaching is usually an exposition of a text, which often lasts for an hour, and the preacher is normally the pastor of the congregation or a guest pastor.

The sermon is usually carefully prepared before the service, and is followed or concluded with an ‘altar call’. The ‘alter call’ is the last, but not least item emphasized in African Pentecostal services. When the pastor finishes preaching, he or she calls or challenges people to come forward for prayers. People respond according to their needs, some come forward to receive Christ into their lives, and others come to receive healing [by laying on of hands]. After this prayer line, the offering is taken up by the ushers who pass around plates or baskets. The service usually ends with a prayer of blessing from the pastor.

4.4.3. Preaching in African Pentecostal churches.

Hermeneutics [preaching] in African Pentecostal churches has attracted not only people, but also much debate. This debate, according to Arrington (1994:104), is primarily based on

“the role of the Holy Spirit, who, is continually referred to by Pentecostals as an important factor in hermeneutics”. This Pentecostal hermeneutic is praxis oriented with experience and scripture being maintained in a dialectical relationship. And, the Holy Spirit maintains this ongoing relationship. Pentecostal preaching is quite distinct from the monologues which characterize most of the mainline reformed churches. According to C. Peter Wagner (1986:110), “the Pentecostal preacher enters into a kind of dialogue with the audience. The sermon is an experience for those who listen, as they respond with loud shouts of approval which surge up like waves breaking over the sea shore.” The Bible, which is the word of God, is understood, in Pentecostal preaching, at face value. This face-value interpreting of scripture without any concern for the historical distance allows Pentecostal preachers to emphasize the immediate meaning of Scripture. Joseph Byrd (1993:204-205), after researching the first decade of Pentecostal preaching makes the following four descriptive conclusions about the sermons:

- Preaching was spontaneous and not relegated to professional clergy,
- Preaching participated in the overall trajectory of worship services, it was not necessarily the climax of the service.
- The congregation participated in the sermon in terms of responding, but the sermon also allowed for participation of the congregation more fully in the altar call,
- The sermon reached for an immediate experience for the listeners and was not characterized by hermeneutics or time spent in exegeting a text in a historical or critical manner. But the preacher focused on the immediate meaning of a text and not upon what a text meant in its original context.

To illustrate how the hermeneutics is given wing by the homiletics, take Luke 13:10-17; for example, the periscope which shows how Jesus healed the crippled woman. An African Pentecostal preacher would first describe the sad fate of the woman until everyone would recognize a similar case in the home village or urban area. There might be an interlude with a plaintive song. Then, the entry of Jesus into the context would be portrayed in such vivid

colours that each person would feel the same presence. The past is given life in the present. The healing occurs as the whole congregation stands to sing that “in the word of God, there is power, in the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow”. Other victory choruses would follow before the main text, verse 16. Jesus calls the woman “the daughter of Abraham”, meaning the one in whose body the powerful promise of God was at work. Her social context had constructed her otherwise, as a cripple - ugly, dysfunctional and worthless. She had accepted the verdict for life. But, Jesus renames her and imbues her with an image of being different. She accepts the counter-verdict, “She stood up straight and began to praise God” (verse 13). Jesus roots himself in the enduring covenant of God, refuses manifest givens and voices a **different reality** that is borne on the counter text in Genesis.

African Pentecostal hermeneutics surfs the counter-verdict of God and uses these to conscientise the people of God in the midst of life’s debilitating contexts. And Pentecostal homiletics is choreographed as a ritual validation and commitment. The homiletics crafts language in a transformative manner so that the listener would begin to speak differently and soon through biographical testimonies, sharing and validating the truths being advocated. This process of turning the text into oral and experiential models is a discovery of what the Bible originally was. Pentecostal hermeneutics, therefore, provides an altered view of self-identity-change, bridge-burning and cognitive restructuring or restoration.

In these churches, the Bible is the central source of preaching, the final authority for all that is taught, practiced and preached. For this reason, the preachers give pre-eminence to the Bible, and use it to justify and reinforce their messages to the people. The Bible forms the basis and provides the conditions for holy living and victorious lives. One of the main attractions of the church for Pentecostals in my observations and according to responses to the questionnaire is that the Word of God is preached and topics on the Christian life taught. Some of the important teachings include discipleship, soul winning, prosperity, loving one another, how to live a holy life and, the second coming of Christ. One of the fundamental themes emphasized in this African Pentecostal preaching is what members often describe as

“salvation”. This involves a call to repentance and accepting Jesus Christ by faith as Lord and saviour. For this reason, the altar call is a very important conclusion to most sermons. In many growing African Pentecostal churches one may see a number of people on a prayer line after the sermon every Sunday.

However, a much more detailed analysis of the sermons preached in Pentecostal churches needs to be done if any profile of the churches, such as that described by Turner (1965:81), is to be attempted. My own observations of the views of members on the preaching in these churches, and the preaching that I observed, will need to be tested through more thorough empirical analysis, by which an in-depth perspective may be achieved. At this point, this observation on preaching must not be taken as representative of, but as indicative of some of the trends in African Pentecostal churches.

4.4.4. The Manifestation of the Spirit in African Pentecostal churches.

4.4.4.1. Speaking in tongues [malilimi]

Speaking in tongues [malilimi] is one of the important elements in African Pentecostal churches. This gift brings much spiritual satisfaction for a large number of people, and non-Pentecostals should be cautious, as Paul himself recommends, about forbidding others to speak in tongues (1Corinthians14:39). According to Harvey Cox (1995:82), primal speech pinpoints the spiritual import of what scholars of religion sometimes call “ecstatic utterance” or glossolalia, what the earliest Pentecostals called “speaking in tongues” and many now refer to as “praying in the spirit”. Cox goes on to state that “in an age of bombast, hype, and double speak, when ultra specialized terminologies and contrived rhetoric seem to have emptied and pulverized language, the first Pentecostals learned to speak - and their successors still speak with another voice, a language of the heart.” He furthermore makes the observation that “there can be little doubt that Pentecostals have rediscovered a powerful and primal form of religious expression. One of the reasons they continue to attract people is

that they emphasize the experience, not the interpretation, and that is what an ecstasy-deficient generation seems to be looking for.” (1995:88).

For Clark and Lederle (1983:43) to be a Pentecostal is to have experienced the power of God in Christ. This experience is essential to Pentecost, without it there cannot be a true identification of the church with *The Book of Acts*. Unlike critics of African Pentecostalism who reduce it to an experience-centered theology, Clark and Lederle(1983:44) describe it as a Christ-centered, experience-certified theology. And Paul Gifford makes the following observation on speaking-in-tongues:

“No one can call himself born-again without having gone through a process in which the ‘infilling’ of the Holy Spirit was experienced, manifest in trance-like states and speaking in tongues...In this process malilime is primarily seen as the absolute assurance that one has succeed in tapping into a superior power which purifies, protects one’s day to day existence, and heals any sort of more or less mystical affliction which may even include witchcraft” (1992: 67).

In many non-Pentecostal churches, speaking in tongues is forbidden on the grounds that it is not an appropriate gift for the church today. The Scofield Bible, says in its marginal notes on 1 Corinthians 14:1 that “tongues and sign gifts are to cease,” and many unfortunate, sincere evangelicals believe it. Many Protestant Christians in the reformed tradition have argued that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit were characteristic of the apostolic times, but not of today. Most exponents of the Reformed tradition teach that when the period of “apostolic history” was replaced by “church history”, the gift of the Holy Spirit ceased to operate. This line of thought is argued at length by Oscar Cullman in his book (1956), *The Early Church*. It is not my purpose here to argue, but to respond briefly. Firstly, the Bible nowhere explicitly states that the gifts have been withdrawn, or will cease with the passing of the last of the original apostles. On the contrary, 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 states that prophecies, tongues and knowledge will be needed until the “perfect comes” that is, until Christ returns. Secondly, Ephesians 4:11 teaches that “the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers are all required to prepare God’s people for the work of



ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in faith.” Lastly, when the epistles mention the gifts, it is, according to Bridge and Phyper (1973:28), to instruct Christians in their proper use and “never how to phase them out.”

4.4.4.2. Prophecy.

According to Eddie Gibbs (1981:226), prophecy is a message given directly from God through individuals who have learned to listen to Him and are prepared to speak on his behalf. Gibbs goes on to say that “the message may come as a result of study or be spontaneous...a proclamation regarding the present or a prediction relating to the future. It may be addressed to the church for her up-building, encouragement and consolation, to an unbeliever to convict him of sin, or to society at large.”

4.4.4.3. Falling down (slain in the Spirit).

In most African Pentecostal churches to fall down under the power of God or to be slain in the Spirit is when people come under the manifestation of the presence of God’s spirit. The entire Bible is a declaration of God’s dynamic presence amongst his people, whether it be a celebration of his intervention in the past, a chronicling of recent experiences, or an anticipation of his ultimate and eternal manifestation at the end of history when “God, Himself, will be with his people” (Revelation 21:3). From the beginning to the end, the Scriptures are a literary record of God’s coming to humankind, at his initiative. It is this experiential reality of the presence of God that stands at the centre of biblical faith; the “theology of presence” is so much the unique feature of the Scriptures, that it is that which distinguishes Christian faith from both classical antiquity, and current world religions (Terrien Samuel, 1978: xxviii, 28). In the *Journals* that John Wesley kept, according to Nehemiah Cumnock (1909:122; see also Harvey Cox, 1995:68) numerous accounts are

recorded of the manifestations of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. A sample is quoted as follows:

“At New Year’s 1739, George Whitefield, my brother Charles, three others and I, with about sixty of our brethren, were present at a love-feast in Fetter Lane. About three in the morning, as we were continuing in prayer, the power of God came upon us so mightily that many cried out in holy joy, *while others were knocked to the ground*. As soon as we were recovered a little from awe and amazement at the presence of God, we broke out in one voice, ‘We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord’.” (Italics mine).

According to Dun (1975:189,194,192) “the earliest Christian community was essentially charismatic and enthusiastic in nature, in every aspect of its common life and worship, its development and mission. The fact is that ecstatic and physical phenomena have been a regular concomitant of religious awakening and revival movements within the history of Christianity. Not for nothing were the Quakers and shakers so nicknamed.”

4.5. Pattern and reason for the growth of the African Pentecostal Church:

4.5.1. Main growth factors

4.5.1.1. Conversion

Conversion to Pentecostalism expresses a model for the construction of new identity. The notion of being “born again” encapsulates a particular attitude towards agency and social change, in which the individual is exhorted to make an absolute break with his personal as well as collective past. Upon “giving his life to Christ”, he or she re-enters the world as a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17), as a sort of “blank slate” upon which the identity will gradually be written, following a model of spiritual growth from Christian “infanthood” into full “adulthood”.

Birgit Meyer (1996 :199-230) argues that “conversion to Pentecostalism entails a kind of conversion to modernity, insofar as the process of breaking with individual and collective

pasts enables converts to become “autonomous selves,” free individuals in possession of their subjectivity. She further notes that Pentecostalism in Ghana is self-consciously ‘global,’ connecting believers with a global community of born-again Christians, and offering a scope for identification which goes far beyond local culture.” Eddie Gibbs calls this act of turning by the individual “conversion.” He points out that “it represents a complete turnaround rather than a minor course correction; a turning away from sin to salvation and service in Christ. It is a turning from darkness to light, from the domain of Satan to the kingdom of God, from slavery to sin to freedom, service and worship of Christ as Lord.” (Gibbs,1981:145). According to Harvey Cox (1995:176), the success of Pentecostalism in converting massive numbers is clearly related to the opportunity it provides for the mediation of “urbanization or class conflict”.

4.5.1.2. Deliverance

In African Pentecostal spirituality, salvation embodies not only new birth, a sanctification of the affections and being filled with the Spirit, but also healing from sickness and deliverance from the demonic. In his book (1988), *Delivered from the Power of darkness*, Emmanuel Eni recounts his involvement with the occult evil spirit-world. This book has become popular in Zambia.

In the Zambian Christian context, the forces of evil include not just Satan and his cohorts of demons, but also witchcraft, sorcery, magic, evil eye, ancestral spirits and traditional deities who may make their presence felt in the lives of the people in order to oppress them. Therefore, the need for deliverance may be evident through what evil spirits are doing in a person’s life (Mark 5:1-20). Diagnosis may also occur through “word of knowledge”, prophecy or discernment granted by the Holy Spirit. In traditional spirit possession, the personalities of deities often provide clues to what determines the behaviour of the possessed person. Similarly a patient may in the process of deliverance writhe on the floor

and that would be suggestive of a ‘serpentine spirit’ at work. Manifestations of demonic oppression and signs of successful deliverance include tangible signs like screaming, yawning, coughing, belching, heavy sneezing, excretion of faeces, crying, sweating and vomiting.

Therefore, for salvation to be holistic, it must include deliverance not only from servitude to sin and demonic possession and oppression, but also from the fear and fascination with demons in which many Zambians seem to be trapped.

4.5.1.3. Prosperity.

The formal theology of the African Pentecostal Churches is essentially the message of faith and prosperity. Kenneth Copeland (1974:26) defines prosperity as “the ability to use the power of God to meet the needs of mankind.” Prosperity is not seen as financial blessing alone, but as spiritual, mental and physical prosperity as well. The underlying teaching of the “message of prosperity” is that God rewards faithful Christians with good health, financial success and material wealth, “according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). On the provenance of prosperity teachings in African Pentecostal Churches, Gifford’s view (1990:373-388) is that “the theology is incomprehensible apart from its American origins.” But, Ojo (1996:106) expresses an alternative view, insisting that “the prosperity message is original to Africa’s Pentecostal churches.”

Theologically the message of prosperity reflects the belief that the “blessing of Abraham” has been willed by God to believers as beneficiaries of the new covenant mediated by Christ (Galatians Chapter 3). In this new covenant form, the “blessing of Abraham” is explained by the African Pentecostal churches, to encapsulate success in life’s endeavors, health, progress and general well-being. These churches are not reinvigorating the Protestant ethic. On the contrary, Freston (1995:131-132) is surely correct when he writes that “Prosperity theology

represents an advanced stage of the decline of the Protestant ethic.” This message of prosperity is attracting many to African Pentecostal churches.

4.5.1.4. Cell groups.

This is another area where you see growth in African Pentecostal churches. In his book, *Balanced Church Growth*, Ebbie C. Smith (1984:159), says that “congregations composed of small groups of believers meeting in homes or other settings provide another promising pattern for urban ministry.” He continues that there is no reason a small group of believers cannot constitute a bonafide church. This New Testament pattern (Philemon 2; Romans 16), Ebbie explains, “promises help in reaching people in apartment complexes, condominiums, and manufactured homes.” He argues that “the small group approach need not, however, be restricted to the beginning stage of church development.” And Calvin Guy, who agrees with Ebbie Smith, contends that “the house church approach holds great potential for reaching the cities.” Concerning the house church, Guy says the following:

“The poverty of the urban masses, their inability to erect and support large structures, and the psychology of the urban poor that prevents them from identification with large numbers of people, point to the small group and the house church as the most feasible approach. In the small, caring communities where Christians listen to the Word, share the sacraments, uphold one another in prayer, and witness verbally and visibly to their neighbors, it may be that the faith will flow as in the first century to the great urban populations.” (1979: 127).

The cell groups are the empowering structures of these African Pentecostal churches. Through cell groups, new members find a home and begin to be integrated, nurtured, equipped and empowered. According to Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr (1990:94-95), “Community can occur most completely only in a small group. A cell group, numbering less than fifteen people, is all important. Essential elements of community include interpersonal commitments and a sense of belonging. Community takes place when there is a shared life, allowing common goals and commitments to develop between all of its members.” He adds that “as the extended family is the oikos of society, so the cell group is the extended family,



the basic building block, of the people of God.” In his book, *I believe in Church Growth*, Eddie Gibbs (1981:165-168) lists seven reasons for establishing cell groups in the church: (i) To provide a learning situation; (ii) To develop meaningful relationship; (iii) To identify gifts; (iv) To train new leaders; (v) To ensure greater pastoral care; (vi) To demonstrate concern for the neighbourhood; (vii) To establish a base for neighbourhood evangelism.

Roger indicates in his research (1994:3-22) that large churches can maintain high levels of commitment and conformity if they are grouped into small homogenous units; and Cho Yonggi affirms that “for church growth, the real secret is home cell groups” (1997: vi).

4.5.2. Recruitment methods:

4.5.2.1. Exorcism.

Exorcism plays a major role in the mission activities of many African Pentecostal churches. It is considered to be important to pastoral ministry in this context, and is one of the methods for recruiting new members. A ministry of exorcism has a liberating value “which appears to confront the existential needs and fears of people in a ritually understandable and therefore psychologically and religiously satisfying manner” (Daneel, 1990:220). Exorcism takes many different forms. In African Pentecostal churches, exorcism takes place in an atmosphere of prayer, of singing and dancing or clapping hands, with or without the use of symbolic objects. In a Christian context, manifestation of evil spirits usually occurs in an atmosphere of worship and prayer.

Different manifestations include shouting and screaming, restlessness, violent contortions of the body (often accompanied by extraordinary strength), jumping, falling to the ground, and running around. Pastors usually pray and exorcise demons until the people are set free. This exorcism is achieved during sustained prayer when the demons are rebuked and commanded to leave the victim in the Name of Jesus Christ. The church’s ministry of exorcism therefore

becomes, as Daneel (1990:220) has pointed out, “an effective means of communicating the good news of Christ’s lordship over all principalities and powers in the universe.”

4.5.2.2. Witnessing.

In most African Pentecostal churches, witnessing is spontaneous through the believer’s conduct of life. These churches believe that our daily contact with people seems to be a far mightier means of evangelization than most Christians realize. According to Paton (1975:93) “The local congregation in each place should begin to take seriously its life style and to ask what witness this is giving to the world and what nurture it is giving to its members. In each situation the church must examine its style of life to find what life style is saying to the world. If we are to reflect the kingdom of God in our own lives that others may be led to salvation, we must develop and express in each Christian community the quality of life which is sensitive to the whole community and to the whole created universe.” In his book, *The church before the watching world*, Francis Schaeffer (1972) writes that “Christian conduct of life is today not only scrutinized by the local community, but through the mass media and television. That, which Christians do or neglect to do, is displayed to a world-wide community. Whatever happens in the congregation and is mutually experienced by its members is also observed by the surrounding community. The congregation has to give witness to the fact that every relationship in which it stands has been changed fundamentally by its relationship to God in Christ.”

Outsiders, according to the Apostle Paul (1Thess 4:12; Titus 2:8), have to be convinced by the dedicated way of life of the believers. Therefore, Christians have to check their words, deeds, and attitudes constantly so that they may further the course of the Gospel instead of hindering it. In most cases, the conduct of members of the African Pentecostal Church seems to play a vital part in the spreading of the Gospel and the constant growth in membership.

4.5.2.3. Healing.

Using information gleaned from the interviews (Interviews, 2008), writings of exponents and observation of the healing phenomenon, one begins to understand the role of healing, and thus to uncover the dynamics of African Pentecostalism in Zambia. Healing is one of the major factors in recruiting new members in these churches. Healing is employed as a form of pastoral care, because it aims at restoring disturbed persons to proper functioning order. The view taken is that healing recovers for Zambian Christianity important dimensions of the Christian message of salvation that has everything to do with spiritual and physical well-being. Prayers for healing may be accompanied by some form of touch or laying on of hands and / or anointing with oil. The belief that illness may be set in motion by sin is inspired by such biblical texts as James 5:14-16:

“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

On the basis of this and other passages, Zambian proponents of the healing phenomenon generally believe firmly in a causal relationship between sin, the work of demons and sickness. This is why healing is tied to deliverance. In the Zambian healing and deliverance discourse, being able to defy traditional gods and taboos is seen as one of the ultimate signs of a delivered and hence empowered Christian. For the individual, healing means total liberation.

Diverse views on demonology, healing and deliverance provide evidence of practical differences between African Pentecostal thought and the inability of traditional Protestant churches to respond acutely to the theological questions raised by African Christians. According to Mbiti, the gap between the African and Western theologies is illustrated in a hypothetical story involving a Western-trained African theologian. He had acquired all there

was to know about Western philosophy and theology and, yet returned home completely alienated from his people and unable to translate his theology into practice. The following is Mbiti's illustration:

“...the young man returned to his home after nine and a half years of theological training with a PhD in theology and excess baggage to confront the realities of his people whose hopes he incarnated. At the peak of the celebrations marking his return, his sister fell to the ground, possessed by the spirit of her great aunt - and they looked to him to exorcise the spirit. But all he could do was to demythologize her suffering according to Rudolf Bultmann” (1976: 18).

Mbiti concludes this story narrated in the context of the relevance of healing to African Christian theology by noting that the young theologian had forgotten among other things that “God's kingdom comes with power.” Indeed healing is an area in which the African Pentecostal churches have distinguished themselves as churches whose spirituality is relevant to the needs of the indigenous context.

4.6. Healing and deliverance: Case studies from Grace Outreach Ministries International, Chipata Centre.

The following reports were written after interviews (interviews 2008) with some of the members (who once suffered) at the centre:

4.6.1. Case 1: Mwatitha Mbewe (40)

Mwatitha was delivered from demons after being bound for 10 years. On 15th July 1994, there was a revival service at a village called Cilobwe in Chipata - the eastern part of Zambia. After the sermon, people responded by coming to be prayed for. Among the people who came for deliverance, was the woman named Mwatitha Mbewe, who appeared to be pregnant. When she was asked about her pregnancy, she responded by saying that she had been in that state for the last ten years. She explained that she had a dream one day in which someone gave her meat and she ate. When she woke up, her stomach was paining and began

to expand like one who was expecting. After prayers for her deliverance, she asked to be permitted to go to the toilet. When she came back from the toilet, her stomach had become normal. Mwatitha Mbewe acknowledged that after prayer, she was delivered and healed, her health had greatly improved. Now she is fine.

4.6.2. Case 2: Grace Banda (35).

Grace visited the GOMI Centre on the 13th August, 2000, with a medical report from Mwami hospital (Chipata). According to the report, Grace had a growth in her stomach and, that she was to be operated upon within seven days or she would die.

After sharing the word and much prayer, the Bishop convinced Grace that she needed deliverance because she was possessed by demons. Then the deliverance session started. The Bishop commanded the demons possessing Grace to come out in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Then the demons spoke through her, saying, “We are the ones responsible for Grace’s health problems.” The Bishop commanded the demons to leave and Grace was delivered. The pain and the swelling disappeared. Grace acknowledged that she was delivered and healed. However, she was advised to go for a check-up to the same hospital (Mwami). Later that month, the doctors, at Mwami hospital, confirmed that Grace was healed. This was after some examinations had been carried out and they could not find the growth in her stomach. Grace is now free and totally healed.

4.6.3. Case 3: Mary Ndlovu (38).

One Sunday morning on 10th November, 2002, as the Bishop and the intercessors were praying, Mary approached the Bishop on crutches for help. Mary told the Bishop that some time before she had begun to experience pains in her left leg, which continued for a year. Soon she noticed that her left leg was becoming short. She went to the hospital for examinations, and was told that she was lacking fluids in the joints, and that was the cause

of the pain. The doctors also recommended that she should undergo an operation which was going to be extremely expensive.

The Bishop encouraged her to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ would heal her and restore her left leg to normal. Mary was asked if she was willing to surrender her life to the Lord, which she did. Then Mary's deliverance and total healing session began. It took four days of continuous prayer for her to be healed. The source of her problem was revealed to be evil spirits. When they had been exorcized, she was completely healed and her left leg was restored to normal. To date, Mary is alive and well and walking fine without crutches.

4.7. Conflicting views on healing and its place in the mission of the church today.

Different schools of thought hold conflicting views on the subject of the supernatural gift of healing. One school of thought believes that the gift of healing ceased to operate when the period of 'redemptive history' was replaced by 'church history'. This is argued at length by Oscar Cullman (1956) in his book, *The Early Church*. Another school of thought has questioned as to whether miracles continued into the modern age, and whether supernatural healing was needed after the discovery of medicine. In his article entitled *Apostolic Healers Proclaiming the Total Gospel*, Allen E. Anthony (1991:5), complains that "it is unfortunate, but largely true, that the congregations of the church have abandoned healing and healthcare delivery to the medical establishment. Even where churches have been involved in medical missions, these have been relegated to medical professionals and divorced from the day-to-day mission of the local congregation." He says that the "problem is that churches have been conditioned by the dualistic influence of the Western philosophy of Descartes, who claimed that the body on the one hand and the mind and spirit on the other, though co-existing, have no influence whatsoever on each other." Allen argues that "basic to Western thought is materialism, which denies the importance or reality of the human spirit. Thus we have

tended to be guilty of a 'schizophrenic' or split-mind approach, isolating our members' use of medical science, as well as psychology, from the realities of spirituality and the need of the church to be a healing community." He argues strongly that "health is not the business only of the medical profession or of psychologists. It is the business also and in fact definitively so, of the church." Some would disagree with Allen, but I totally agree with him if we take the Scriptures as a basis of our function. Our function becomes apparent in the Gospel of Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-11. These verses form our theological cornerstone of commitment to the ministry of healing as a mandate from our Lord Jesus Christ to be obeyed. This mandate comes from the very will and love of Christ Jesus. Jesus sends his disciples (and we are his disciples today), not only to "preach the kingdom," but to "heal the sick" as well. As a result of the split-mindedness of Western thought which holds the "either-or" approach to body and mind, matter and spirit, the "both-and" approach of biblical theology has been rejected by some. Therefore, healing as salvation must be expressed in word and deed as we preach the total Gospel, no longer neglecting the ministry of healing. However, it is not my purpose here to pursue this line of argument; but my own experiences coupled with an extensive reading of literature leads me to the conclusion that healing is the most convincing demonstration to people that God is "with us" (Mulungu-alinafe), that He is not " out there" beyond the reach of human compassion.

According to Philip Jenkins (2002:125), "from the earliest days of the European missions, the promise of healing was at the heart of Christian successes. Today, the rising African churches stand or fall by their success in healing." The purpose of healing is therefore, to fulfill the purposes of the kingdom of God. Wimber, who depends on George Ladd and James Kallas for his understanding of the kingdom, argues that God's purpose in healing is to further his kingdom (Wimber, 1987:40-41, see also, C. Peter. Wagner, 1988:92-99). Sin, the origin of sickness, originates in evil and Satan's kingdom; therefore, sickness proceeds from Satan. And through healing the sick, Jesus defeated Satan and demonstrated his rule



over sickness. Healing is the pronouncement of victory over the dark kingdom of Satan (Wimber, 1987:15, 36, 37).

Unlike Wimber, Wagner, in his book (1988), *How to Have a Healing Ministry without Making Your Church Sick*, bases his understanding of the purpose of healing on principles he extracts from the Lord's Prayer. Ministry is focused on making earth like heaven; Ministry is a battle to restore the values of the kingdom to a fallen creation. Wagner further emphasizes the importance of the cosmic battle in understanding the purpose of healing.

Differing with both Wimber and Wagner, Jack Deere (1993: 120) starts with God's compassion and mercy. He says that Jesus' compassion was aroused so that "he did not give them theological platitudes; he *healed* them." Deere points out how miracles manifest in the kingdom. He asserts that demonstrable power over illness and demonic force is "essential" to the kingdom (1993:225). Deere's explanation of the place of miracles in the kingdom does not emphasize the cosmic battle as heavily as Wimber and Wagner do. In his chapter entitled *Signs and Wonders*, however, he twice notes his complete agreement with Wimber's explication of the kingdom (Deere, 1993:34,36).

All three of the authors, Wagner, Wimber, and Deere agree on the importance and the place of healing in the mission of the church today. Power evangelism, as popularized by Wimber, is evangelization with the power of God as the tool. In discussing the appeal of Christianity to the Romans, Wagner (1988:79) points out that "while Christianity was being presented to unbelievers in both word and deed, it was the deed that far exceeded the word in evangelistic effectiveness."

As shown above, these authors link the purpose of healing in mission with the purposes of the kingdom. However, the importance of the kingdom of God in explaining the purposes and place of God's healing in the mission of the church today should be more fully investigated. Indeed, the more recent treatments reference the kingdom of God as important in a theology of healing. Our theology of healing should be enriched by our understanding of the kingdom of God. We must conclude, then, that unless we hold that healing was only

meant for the early Christian community as a special grace to get the church established, the healings characteristic of the early church should somehow continue happening in our day.

4.8. Conclusion.

The African Pentecostal Churches were birthed in innovative mission initiatives unprecedented in the history of mission, motivated by a compelling need to preach and even more significantly, to experience a new message of the power of the Holy Spirit. These churches have emphasized the manifestation of divine power through healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues and other Pentecostal phenomena. Healing and protection from evil are among the most prominent parts of the liturgy in their evangelism and mission. As Cox (1995:247) has observed, in Africa, Pentecostals “provide a setting in which the African conviction that spirituality and healing belong together is dramatically enacted.”

Therefore, according to Melvin L Hodges, in his famous book, *The indigenous Church* (1953:132), “the foundation for Pentecostal mission and the reason for its continued expansion is the ‘person filling of the Holy Spirit’ who gives gifts of ministry to untold thousands of indigenous ‘common people’, creating active, vibrantly expanding and indigenous Churches all over the world.” And the African Pentecostal churches, like the ones highlighted in this study, are some of the indigenous churches in Zambia which are creative, active and vibrantly expanding as a result of the Holy Spirit; who is giving gifts of healing, exorcism, and prophecy to the ministry.

Finally, the Holy Spirit revival is important to the ongoing life of the church - the story of Pentecostalism which traces its beginning from the Azusa Street Mission proves the point. Pentecostalism has changed the face of twenty-first century Christianity worldwide. From time to time the church needs a new infusion of life from the Holy Spirit. This infusion from the Holy Spirit is intended to put the church back on its mission track. In his book, *I Believe*

in *the Holy Spirit*, Michael Green (1975:12) speaks of the neglect of the Holy Spirit under the provocative subtitle: *The Spirit: unknown or domesticated?*. He says that “there is one group of Christians to whom the Holy Spirit is virtually unknown, due to their lack of expectancy with regard to his intervention in their every day lives.” He suggests that this “neglect of the Holy Spirit among another group may be characterized by the efforts to circumscribe his activities and hem him in with respect to his charismatic activities.” These persons attempt to “domesticate” the Spirit, for the purposes of avoiding his influence.

And Harry Boer, under the title *The Reticent Spirit*, discusses the question as to why the church is not aware of the Spirit’s ministry as the source of its witness. He gives possible reasons why the doctrine of the Holy Spirit tends to be neglected, especially in an age which is strongly influenced by empiricism and rationalism. He says that “in relation to the other persons of the Trinity the Spirit has remained in the background, being overshadowed by the more concrete figures of the Father and Son in theological reflection.” Furthermore, Boer points out that “*Perhaps it is because of the hidden role which the Spirit plays in redemption that he has been given a name which, as contrasted with that of the Father and the Son, allows of no concrete representation or association in our minds*” (1961:134) (Italics mine).

Boer argues that “while the church has produced developed theologies and christologies, there has been no unified and clearly circumscribed pneumatology developed.” (1961:130-131). Perhaps the very systematic and controversial theological context in which pneumatology has developed has contributed to the ‘silence on the Holy Spirit.’ And despite the theological controversy that has surrounded the Holy Spirit, Roland Allen states (1960:21) that “it is in the revelation of the Holy Spirit as a missionary Spirit that the Acts stands alone in the New Testament.” And Allen speaks of the cruciality of the book of Acts in the following way:

“In the Acts it (the missionary role of the Spirit) is the one prominent feature. It is asserted, it is taken for granted, from the first page to the last...*it is necessary to any true apprehension of the Holy Spirit and his work that we should understand it and realize it...if we ignore it...we lose sight of the perfection of the Spirit.* Our view is necessarily



one-sided, our understanding of the past is robbed of its true foundation, *our conception of our present duty is incomplete*, and our hope for the future is rendered doubtful and indistinct.” (Italics mine).

The Book of Acts, according to Allen, reveals a major role of the Holy Spirit, His missionary role. For Allen, if the Church disregards this role it amounts to “mission impossible.” Therefore, the forces that threaten the church today, like poverty, HIV/AIDS, witchcraft, etc, and the responding cries for revival, point to the need for a new infusion of life from the Holy Spirit. And African Pentecostal churches have taken a lead in this direction.

