

**The Evangelical Church in Africa:**  
**Towards a Model for Christian Discipleship**

by

**Vernon Ellis Light**

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# Table of Contents

<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>10</b>
 <b>CHAPTER ONE:</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>11</b>
1. Background to this study .....	11
2. The problem to be addressed .....	18
3. Proposed solution to the problem .....	19
4. Sub-problems and corresponding proposed solutions .....	20
4.1 The problem of Africans trying to experience Christianity in Western culture, and inculturation of the Gospel as a proposed solution .....	20
4.2 The problem of writing off all, or nearly all, elements of African cultures, and merely avoiding syncretism and restoring African identity as a proposed solution .....	21
4.3 The problem of inadequate application of the Gospel to every area of life, and a holistic and comprehensive application as a proposed solution .....	22
4.4 The problem of battling to see Christianity as final revelation and largely as fulfilment of African traditional religions, and teaching the difference between natural and special revelation as a solution .....	23
5. Structure of the dissertation .....	23
 <b>CHAPTER TWO:</b>	
<b>A PRESENTATION AND DEFENSE OF EVANGELICALISM IN THE CURRENT PHILOSOPHICAL-SCIENTIFIC-RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>1. Evangelicalism .....</b>	<b>27</b>
1.1 Is evangelicalism a homogeneous movement? .....	27
1.2 A brief history of evangelicalism .....	27
1.3 Tenets of evangelicalism .....	30
1.4 The story-line or plot-line of the Bible .....	31
1.5 Special challenges facing evangelicals in Africa .....	33

<b>2.</b>	<b>A defense of the evangelical view of Scripture and the Gospel .....</b>	<b>34</b>
2.1	The reasonableness of the existence of an authoritative Bible .....	35
2.2	The reasonableness of the Bible's plot-line .....	38
2.2.1	The human tale .....	38
2.2.2	The Bible has a solution for real guilt .....	39
2.2.3	Christianity's harmonizing of a righteous, loving God and evil in the world is reasonable .....	39
2.2.4	The Bible's absolute morals can produce a moral society that is stable, safe, caring and productive .....	41
2.2.5	The plot-line of the Bible is rooted in real history .....	42
2.2.6	The plot-line of the Bible climaxes in a wonderful eternal future which ultimately all humans desire .....	43
2.2.7	It is logical that humans should serve and obey God and find their ultimate purpose and fulfilment in him .....	44
2.2.8	Conclusion .....	44
<b>3.</b>	<b>A summary and critique of Modernism and Postmodernism .....</b>	<b>46</b>
3.1	<b>Modernism .....</b>	<b>47</b>
3.1.1	Premodernism .....	47
3.1.2	What constitutes modernism .....	47
3.1.3	The scientific method .....	47
3.1.4	The birth of the scientific method .....	48
3.1.5	The influence of the Enlightenment .....	49
3.1.6	The undermining of theism .....	49
3.1.7	Modernism found wanting .....	50
3.1.8	Application to the African Evangelical Church (evangelical churches in Africa) .....	57
3.2	<b>Postmodernism .....</b>	<b>58</b>
3.2.1	Accommodates the scientific method and subjectivity in understanding reality .....	59
3.2.2	Absolute knowledge is not possible .....	60
3.2.3	The function of language is limited .....	64
3.2.4	Postmodern Christian theologians cannot escape the authority of the Bible .....	66
3.2.5	Some dangers of postmodernism .....	67
3.3.6	Final critique of postmodernism .....	67
<b>4.</b>	<b>Can evangelicals defend exclusivism in the present religious pluralistic climate? .....</b>	<b>70</b>
4.1	Empirical, cherished and philosophical pluralism .....	71
4.2	Radical religious pluralism, inclusivism and exclusivism .....	72
4.2.1	<b>Presentation and critique of radical religious pluralism .....</b>	<b>73</b>

4.2.1.1	All religions are ultimately headed in the same direction and have a common core .....	73
4.2.1.2	No religion can claim absolute truth .....	75
4.2.1.3	All religions claim some kind of special revelation .....	76
4.2.1.4	Pluralism permits, even encourages, syncretism .....	78
4.2.1.5	Final critique of religious pluralism .....	80
4.2.2	<b>Presentation and critique of inclusivism</b> .....	84
4.2.2.1	Are any evangelicals inclusivists? .....	85
4.2.2.2	The two axioms of inclusivism .....	85
4.2.2.3	Arguments of the inclusivists .....	86
4.2.2.3.1	Pagan saints in the Bible were saved .....	86
4.2.2.3.2	There is an offer of salvation after death .....	87
4.2.2.3.3	Inclusivism is claimed not to weaken commitment to world mission .....	87
4.2.2.3.4	The magnitude and triumph of God's love .....	88
4.2.2.3.5	Salvation can be received through good behaviour .....	90
4.2.2.3.6	Final critique of inclusivism .....	90
4.2.3	<b>Exclusivism</b> .....	93
5.	<b>Summary and implications of the chapter</b> .....	95

### CHAPTER THREE:

	<b>AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION</b> .....	98
1.	<b>Overview of African Traditional Religion</b> .....	99
1.1	<b>Core beliefs</b> .....	99
1.1.1	Belief in a Supreme Being, divinities, spirits, and ancestors .....	99
1.1.1.1	Hierarchy of spiritual powers .....	99
1.1.1.2	Supreme Being .....	100
1.1.1.3	Deities/gods .....	102
1.1.1.4	Spirits and Ghosts .....	103
1.1.1.5	Ancestors .....	103
1.1.2	The physical and metaphysical/spiritual worlds are inter-related ....	107
1.1.3	Life force and death .....	109
1.1.4	Diviners, doctors, mediums, witches, sorcerers, prophets, priests, kings .....	110
1.1.5	Community is central .....	113
1.2	<b>Special focus on the traditions of the amaXhosa</b> .....	116
1.2.1	Beliefs about God and the ancestors ( <i>izinyanya</i> ) .....	116

1.2.2	Living in a world of witches, spirits, sprites and people of the river .....	118
1.2.3	Doctors: diviner ( <i>igqirha</i> ) and herbalist ( <i>ixhwele</i> ) .....	121
1.2.3.1	Their work, call and training .....	121
1.2.3.2	Divining methods .....	122
1.2.3.3	Rain-making .....	122
1.2.3.4	Dress .....	122
1.2.4	Community and hospitality .....	122
1.2.5	Afterlife .....	123
1.2.6	Pre-marital sexual behaviour .....	123
1.2.7	Conclusion .....	123
<b>2.</b>	<b>The influence of the ancestral cult on the life of Africans .....</b>	<b>124</b>
2.1	Ancestors and the rites of passage .....	124
2.1.1	Birth .....	124
2.1.2	Puberty .....	125
2.1.3	Marriage .....	125
2.1.4	Death .....	126
2.2	Ancestors and the cycle of seasons and other special occasions .....	127
2.3	Ancestors and daily home-life .....	127
2.4	Ancestors and the wellbeing of the member/clan/tribe .....	127
2.5	Ancestors and fear .....	128
2.6	Ancestors and tribal solidarity and land .....	130
2.7	Ancestors and morality/ethics .....	130
2.8	The ancestors and time and development .....	131
2.9	The cost of the ancestral cult .....	135
2.10	The extent of the traditional beliefs, especially about the ancestors, in Africa today .....	136
2.11	Summary and conclusion .....	138
<b>3.</b>	<b>The source and credibility of knowledge claimed about the ancestors .....</b>	<b>140</b>
3.1	Is there a need to test the truth of the ancestral cult? .....	140
3.2	History testifies to a world-wide occurrence of the ancestral cult .....	141
3.3	Reflection on the source of ancestral beliefs .....	141
3.4	Can modern science help with understanding the spirit realm? .....	143
3.5	Visitations of ancestors .....	143
3.6	Evidence for the ancestral cult .....	145
3.7	Is the 'core of Africanness' paralleled by the Bible? .....	145
<b>4.</b>	<b>Conclusion and implications .....</b>	<b>146</b>

## CHAPTER FOUR:

<b>A COMPARISON OF KEY CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES WITH PARALLEL ATR BELIEFS .....</b>	<b>149</b>
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<b>1.</b>	<b>The Doctrine of God .....</b>	<b>150</b>
1.1	Creator .....	150
1.1.1	The Biblical Doctrine .....	150
1.1.2	Comparison with ATR .....	151
1.2	The immanence, omnipotence and providence of God .....	151
1.2.1	The Biblical Doctrine .....	151
1.2.2	Comparison with ATR .....	151
1.3	The Transcendence of God .....	153
1.3.1	The Biblical Doctrine .....	153
1.3.2	Comparison with ATR .....	154
1.4	God as Saviour .....	154
1.4.1	The Biblical Doctrine .....	154
1.4.2	Comparison with ATR .....	155
1.5	Conclusion .....	157
<b>2.</b>	<b>The Kingdom of Satan .....</b>	<b>157</b>
2.1	The Biblical Doctrine .....	158
2.1.1	Background .....	158
2.1.2	Satan is the source of evil in the world .....	158
2.1.3	Angels and demons/evil spirits .....	160
2.1.4	Idolatry, divination, magic, witchcraft and sorcery .....	161
2.1.5	Defeating Satan's kingdom .....	162
2.2	Comparison with ATR .....	163
2.2.1	Satan .....	163
2.2.2	Evil spirits/demons .....	163
2.2.3	Countering evil spirits/demons .....	163
2.2.4	The power of witch-doctors .....	164
2.2.4.1	Witch-doctor successes .....	164
2.2.4.2	Their power is not the Holy Spirit's power .....	165
2.2.4.3	Possible sources of the witch-doctor's power .....	166
2.2.4.3.1	Neutral/non-moral power .....	166
2.2.4.3.2	More powerful good spirits .....	166
2.2.4.3.3	Ancestors .....	167
2.2.4.3.4	Power from Satan's kingdom .....	167
2.2.5	Conclusion .....	170
<b>3.</b>	<b>The Human Race .....</b>	<b>171</b>
3.1	The Biblical Doctrine .....	171
3.1.1	Created in God's image .....	171
3.1.2	The Fall and resulting judgement .....	171

3.1.3	Christ to the rescue .....	173
3.1.4	Created for community .....	173
3.2	Comparison with ATR .....	174
3.2.1	Origin of the human race .....	174
3.2.2	Origin of sin and distance from God .....	174
3.2.3	The nature of sin and judgement .....	175
3.2.4	Death .....	179
3.2.5	How God communicates with humans .....	179
3.2.6	Community .....	179
3.2.7	Conclusion .....	181
<b>4.</b>	<b>The Person and Work of Christ .....</b>	<b>181</b>
4.1	The Biblical Doctrine .....	181
4.1.1	Creator .....	182
4.1.2	Christ's dual nature and salvific work .....	182
4.1.3	Jesus' ministry was the breaking in of the kingdom of God .....	182
4.1.4	Christ meets all the Christian's needs .....	182
4.1.5	The Lord Jesus Christ must be believed and received .....	183
4.2	Comparison with ATR .....	183
4.2.1	Role of deities in creation .....	183
4.2.2	Religious saviours .....	183
4.2.3	Atonement .....	184
4.2.4	Material and spiritual blessings .....	185
4.2.5	How salvation is received and maintained .....	186
4.2.6	Conclusion .....	187
<b>5.</b>	<b>Discipleship .....</b>	<b>188</b>
5.1	The Biblical Doctrine .....	188
5.1.1	The centrality and pre-eminence of Christ in the Christian's life .....	188
5.1.1.1	Demonstrated from the New Testament .....	188
5.1.1.2	Demonstrated from the Letter to the Philippians .....	190
5.1.2	Holiness .....	190
5.1.3	Teaching .....	191
5.1.4	Prayer .....	191
5.1.5	Service .....	191
5.1.6	Supernatural guidance .....	192
5.1.7	Unity and community .....	193
5.1.8	Spiritual warfare .....	193
5.2	Comparison with ATR .....	194
5.2.1	The centrality and pre-eminence of ancestors in the lives of Africans .....	194
5.2.2	Holiness .....	196
5.2.3	Teaching .....	197
5.2.4	Prayer .....	197

5.2.5	Service .....	199
5.2.6	Supernatural guidance .....	202
5.2.7	Community and Unity .....	202
5.2.8	Spiritual warfare .....	204
5.2.9	Conclusion .....	205
<b>6.</b>	<b>The state and activities of the deceased .....</b>	<b>206</b>
6.1	The Biblical Doctrine .....	207
6.1.1	What happens at death .....	207
6.1.2	Relationship between the spirits of the departed .....	210
6.1.3	Relationship between the departed spirits and God .....	212
6.1.4	The activities of the departed spirits .....	212
6.1.4.1	Rest .....	212
6.1.4.2	Bliss or judgement .....	213
6.1.4.3	Relationship between the dead and the living .....	214
6.1.5	Offering sacrifices and food .....	219
6.2	Comparison with ATR .....	219
<b>7.</b>	<b>Conclusion to the chapter .....</b>	<b>225</b>

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

	<b>CULTURE, IDENTITY AND GOSPEL .....</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Culture, humanity and identity .....</b>	<b>231</b>
1.1	Definition of culture .....	232
1.1.1	Broad definition .....	232
1.1.2	Worldview .....	233
1.2	Is human life essentially cultural? .....	235
1.3	Supra, primary and other identities .....	242
1.3.1	Supra and primary identities .....	242
1.3.2	Other identities .....	244
1.4	Conclusion .....	245
<b>2.</b>	<b>How did Christianity in the New Testament Church impact the convert's personal/group identities? .....</b>	<b>249</b>
2.1	Changes to personal identity .....	249
2.2	A new group identity .....	249
2.3	The identities of Christians and non-Christians contrasted .....	250
2.4	Distinctive ethical standards of Christians .....	250
2.5	Conclusion .....	251
<b>3.</b>	<b>How did the new elements and changes in the convert's personal/group identities in the New Testament impact his/her culture and</b>	



<b>cultural identity?</b> .....	252
3.1 New Testament Christians did not loose their cultural identity .....	252
3.2 The relationship between the supracultural and the cultural in Christianity .....	255
3.3 The New Testament church's struggle to be multicultural .....	259
3.4 Relationships in the world between Christians and non-Christians .....	260
3.5 Conclusion .....	263
<b>4. Summary and conclusion</b> .....	263
<b>5. The application of this chapter to the African evangelical churches</b> .....	269
5.1 Definition of an African .....	269
5.2 An African evangelical Christian .....	271
5.3 What will be the price to pay to be an African evangelical Christian? .....	274
5.4 How to defend the claim that evangelicalism is the answer to Africa's problems .....	275
5.5 Where to now? .....	276

## **CHAPTER SIX:**

<b>AN EVANGELICAL DISCIPLESHIP MODEL FOR AFRICA</b> .....	277
1. Worldview, culture, identity and African Traditional Religion .....	279
2. The African Renaissance .....	284
3. Teaching the doctrines of Christianity .....	288
4. Teaching and applying the Gospel contextually .....	297
5. The writer's insights gained at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape on discipleship needed in African evangelical churches with further reflection on the African situation, the South African in particular .....	315
5.1 <b>Facing the past</b> .....	315
5.1.1 The importance of confession, repentance, forgiveness and restitution .....	315
5.1.2 Learning from the past .....	318
5.1.2.1 Was the cost of Africa's liberation too great? .....	320
5.1.2.1.1 The moral legacy .....	320
5.1.2.1.2 The educational legacy .....	321
5.1.2.1.3 The leadership legacy .....	323
5.1.2.2 The cultural legacy .....	325
5.2 <b>Facing the present</b> .....	332
5.2.1 Problem of blaming the West .....	332

5.2.2	Problems in education .....	334
5.2.3	Problem of laziness .....	338
5.2.4	Problems in development .....	340
5.2.5	Problems of greed, crime and corruption .....	343
5.2.6	Problems of alcohol and drug abuse .....	344
5.2.7	Problems of HIV/AIDS .....	345
5.2.8	Problems of cultural and racial tensions .....	347
5.2.9	Problems in the economy .....	347
5.2.10	Problem of poverty .....	356
5.2.11	Problem of poor leadership .....	362
5.2.12	Problem of a lack of morality .....	369
5.3	<b>Facing the future .....</b>	<b>371</b>
5.4	<b>Pastoral approaches to syncretism .....</b>	<b>373</b>
5.4.1	Use of illustrations .....	373
5.4.2	Understanding the relationship between worldview and culture ....	375
5.4.3	Handling syncretism as sin .....	375
5.4.4	Teaching the causes, purposes and treatment of illnesses, needs, trials, crises and death .....	376
5.4.5	Teaching for transformation .....	376
5.4.6	Applicability of 1 Corinthians 8 -10 and Romans 14:1-15:13 .....	377
5.4.7	Applicability of Philippians 3:15 .....	378
5.4.8	Rev Andile Mbete's story .....	378
6.	<b>A model of discipleship for evangelical churches in Africa .....</b>	<b>384</b>

## **CHAPTER SEVEN:**

<b>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>389</b>
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<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>396</b>
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## SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION

This work is an extension of an MTh dissertation, especially in the area of further reflection on the South African situation. It focuses on the problem of syncretism in the evangelical churches in Africa (the writer is not implying there are no exceptions) stemming from a lack of spiritual maturity. Syncretism is not only a sign of spiritual immaturity – sometimes of no conversion, but also stunts Christian growth. The dissertation's goal is to seek a solution to this problem. This problem is particularly relevant as the evangelical movement in Africa is not young (its roots go back centuries), is numerically massive, growing fast, and has failed to impact Africa significantly. The writer is well aware that evangelical churches avidly claim to believe in the discipleship of converts, so vital if a solid foundation necessary to build mature Christians is to be laid. Traditionally this training has involved sessions on Christian salvation and the spiritual disciplines expected of Christians. Further, this discipleship has been largely Eurocentric, theoretical, and without adequate inculturation of the Christian life in African culture. The widespread weak, ineffective state of the Evangelical Church in Africa indicates this discipleship model is inadequate. The dissertation explores a number of areas that are relevant to discipleship in evangelical churches in Africa: evangelicalism, modernism, postmodernism, radical religious pluralism, African traditional religion (ATR), central Christian doctrines, worldview and its function, the nature and role of culture in society and the church, and the place and importance of cultural identity. The dissertation issues in a range of discipleship principles, most of which do not normally feature in discipleship of African evangelical converts. These principles that are relevant to the African Church are brought together to form a comprehensive and holistic model for Christian discipleship in Africa. The writer shares some of his experiences with his black theological students at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape related to themes handled in the dissertation. Discussions with these students about the generally poor theological, spiritual, moral conditions of African churches was the key motivation to embark on a dissertation that would produce a more effective model of discipleship for churches in Africa. The crises, problems and needs in Africa, as well as the African Renaissance, are also presented and their significance noted for Christian discipleship. It is argued that training up mature evangelical Christians will have a positive impact on both the churches and the continent, especially in helping establish widespread morality and accelerating development so that Africa becomes independent and self-supporting. The dissertation argues that Christianity is largely the continuation, fulfilment, enrichment and reinterpretation of ATR and that it therefore strengthens rather than undermines African identity. It is shown that the greatest mistake of the missionaries and their white (and sometimes black) successors was their failure to appreciate the need to root or inculturate Christianity in the cultures of Africa and not undermine the African identity. They paid scant attention to the African worldview and its huge, key influential role in African life. Their cultural imperialism damaged the African identity, and this did more than anything else to hold back serious development on the African continent. This dissertation attempts to show that Christianity relevantly taught and culturally applied affirms African identity and effectively meets the needs of Africans in a traditional context without the need for syncretism. The dissertation fits into the African Renaissance, but stresses that a Spiritual Reformation that produces mature, evangelical Christians is vital to achieving the goals of the African Renaissance as it restores the African identity and African customs (those compatible with Christianity), lifts African humanity to greater heights, fulfils the longings and dreams implicit in ATR, provides the spiritual and moral fibre Africa needs, and strengthens democracy, all of which are key to development so desperately needed in Africa.

Key words: Evangelicalism, church, African Renaissance, pluralism, modernism, African traditional religion, worldview, culture, identity, inculturation, model of discipleship.

## **Introduction**

### **1. Background to this study**

Sixteen and a half years ago the writer accepted a call to the position of Principal of the Bible Institute Eastern Cape in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. He recently terminated his services at the Institute. He commenced his duties there in January 1994, the year of the April first democratic general election in South Africa – an epochal event never to be forgotten. For the writer, a white South African, this brought his tentative journey into the soul of Africa to a new level of urgency and intensity. The three years of his life before 1994 and the years after have been marked by broadening mental, cultural, racial and social horizons. Hundreds of hours were spent during the writer's tenure at the Institute dialoguing with black students to better understand the realities of apartheid and its legacy. These years of awakening stirred within the writer a deep sorrow and repentance for the horrific decades of separate development and its often cruel application. The writer is truly grateful that his life broke out of the cocoon of racial superiority and spiritual blindness to discover the real Africa and the qualities and great potential of its amazing peoples. His life has been wonderfully enriched since entering this new world. He realized how greatly impoverished his life had been by 'the Group Areas Act, by fear, by suspicion and the unwillingness to practice true community' (Kretzschmar 1995d:50). He has come to appreciate that if the human race consisted of only one ethnic group, say six-plus billion Chinese people, it would not have reflected the greatness of the Creator as the current diversity does. It occurred to the writer one day that it would be an awful experience if his black students, who had become precious to him, arrived at the Institute with white European skins and ways. He would demand their immediate return to their normal colour and African distinctives.

Through the writer's work and studies he became well acquainted with the Church in Africa. Though he was wonderfully impressed with aspects of the African Church, e.g. its size (see below), vibrant worship and preaching zeal, he found, with exceptions, that churches, including evangelical churches, are superficial in their Christian understanding and

experience. Further, he noticed the prevalence of syncretism – ‘combining elements of Christianity with folk [traditional] beliefs and practices in such a way that the gospel loses its integrity and message’ (Hiebert, Shaw and Tienou cited in Hesselgrave 2006:71). He discovered that African Christians generally cling, at least inwardly or subconsciously, to their traditional beliefs. Brown (2002:11) notes this trend in Liberia in the mainline churches: ‘As mainstream churches, we say one thing, and we believe in it, but subconsciously we believe something different’ (see Chapter 3). The writer felt the generally weak and compromised state of the Church in Africa pointed to a deeper problem than just a lack of doctrinal teaching. He suspected that the problems went right back to the time of the missionaries. Their approach was that Christianity was tied to Western culture and there was nothing good in African beliefs and cultures. About eight years ago the writer began to look more closely at culture and its relationship to the Gospel and Christian identity. He began to break away from a Eurocentric perspective and studied the New Testament with new eyes. He suddenly began to realize that culture contributed to self-worth, personal identity, Christian experience, spiritual growth and growth in general. Evangelicalism understands Christianity to be strongly against syncretism, so if culture was crucial to successful mission, there had to be a balance between culture, Gospel and identity. The writer then felt the need to test his hypothesis that a failure to root the Gospel in one’s culture was at the root of the immaturity of the Church in Africa and a major cause of syncretism. The writer also believed that the reason for an undeveloped African Church could be the same for the lack of development across the board in colonial and post-colonial Africa. The writer realized that there would no doubt be many other factors that influenced development.

It will be shown in Chapter 4 that aspects of the worldview and religious beliefs, especially about the ancestors, and the resulting cultures in Africa, are not compatible with Christianity according to evangelicals. The African Renaissance means that traditional religions and related customs are not going to be finally washed away in the tidal wave of Western culture and globalization. It will ensure that syncretism in the churches flourishes and thus continues to be a challenge. The writer came to appreciate that championing Western civilization was not the right answer to the problem of syncretism, especially as many of its features are sinful and as New Testament gentile converts did not have to take on Jewish culture, to them a foreign culture. The writer also became more aware of the role of worldview in shaping culture. As an evangelical he initially believed that the new birth corrected the convert’s worldview in one instantaneous moment. Though there was clearly some truth to this, the

writer's experience with black evangelical Christians alerted him to the possibility that other factors were relevant to reaching full, constant freedom from syncretism, as is the case with a Western convert struggling to be free of Western materialism.

When the writer became persuaded that one's home culture played a key role in Christian understanding and especially the expression and experience of Christianity, he needed to study worldview and culture *per se* and African traditional religions and cultures as he was concerned about the state of the African Church. Further, he felt that because culture – black culture – was at the heart of the West's denigration of and onslaught on Africa, African cultures and the nature and role of culture needed careful exploration. Further, he also needed to discover how the early Christians were brought to full maturity in Christ within their cultures – to freedom from bondage to and fear of the spirit world into security, safety and fulfilment in Christ.

Another issue that helped launch this study was the broad influence in the lives of Africans of the traditional understanding of the ancestors. The beliefs about the ancestors encourage looking back to past wisdom and practices for solutions to spiritual, personal, economic, political and social problems. 'African animistic culture, for its part, sees history moving backwards from the present to the past. There is no messianic hope, no concept of progress, no place for development' (Miller 2001:265). 'The animistic mindset focuses on the past. It is profoundly conservative; progress is unheard of' (:273). This retrospective approach to life has some value. However, it makes it difficult to accept the biblical revelation with its eschatology as the extension, correction and fulfilment of African traditional beliefs, which evangelicals believe stem from incomplete general/natural revelation (what can be learned about God from the created world – see Chapters 2, 4 and 6) and its distortion or perversion. It is also largely restrictive and unhelpful in the modern world where the challenges, complexities, needs, problems and rate of development and change require a mindset characterized by openness, critical thinking, initiative, innovation, and forward-looking. The writer's understanding of God's kingdom is that human development is to meet spiritual and material needs; and thus for the church in Africa to become mature it needs to overcome its poverty. This meant the writer needed to study African traditional religions in order to find out how to counter the ancestral cult's unhelpful influence in the modern world. This information was also important in order to the matter of avoiding syncretism.

Ancestral beliefs also undermine development because the spirit world gets blamed for failure in development. Miller (2001) argues that a people's worldview determines the kind of culture and society that is built, whether one of poverty and lack of development or one of major development (:39). He divides worldviews into three archetypes: biblical theism, secularism and animism (:34). The African worldview falls largely in the third category. 'Animism posits that events come solely from outside, from the spiritual realm, as do the solutions. To solve a problem, one must appease the spirits. Other than that, nothing can be done. People are trapped' (:61). Even if Miller has overstated his position, his comments warrant careful consideration. Louw (2002:73) supports Miller's stance with reference to the Akan tribe: 'They do not regard human spirit as an identifiable self, but as a personal consciousness of powers that they associate with the concept of "destiny". ... The point to grasp is that, within an African model, time is an *event* and life a game of powers. ... Therefore, myth and symbol, ritual and rhythm determine everyday life, not analyses and solutions'. With reference to the need to achieve far better results in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa, Magesa (cited in Benn 2002:11) states, 'Any effective change begins with addressing people's worldview. In the case of HIV/Aids in Africa, this appears to be the approach that could achieve results, a healing from the roots.' It does not seem an exaggeration to claim that certain African traditions, especially the ancestral beliefs, have hampered growth and also the combating of HIV on the African continent. The African worldview is not conducive to an aggressive approach to development. The challenge to evangelicals in Africa then is to entrench the Christian worldview which alters the African worldview and which also encourages development (see Chapters 4 and 6). This called for research in the field of Christian discipleship to find a discipleship model that is relevant to the African context with its lack of development.

Mature, stable democracies and capitalism have proved more successful in developing economies than have non-democracies and socialism and communism. It is significant, therefore, that evangelical Christianity in Africa has been open to democracy (see below). This is because evangelicalism stresses the 'priesthood of all believers.' It is also because it teaches that government is ordained of God, accountable to him, and for the benefit of the people, and a democracy would make it easier to get rid of a government that seriously fails to fulfil the biblical blueprint for governing the people. The result of evangelicals being more accepting of democracy means the evangelical movement is playing a key role in the development of democracy in Africa: 'A democratic revolution driven by evangelical

Christianity is sweeping the Developing World, a massive study conducted by 18 scholars from five continents shows' (Siemon-Netto 2002). Balcomb (2001:8-9) illustrates this from the early work of evangelical missionaries in South Africa: they profoundly shaped 'the democratic ideal in South Africa' through the early leaders they trained and infused with 'the clear stamp of the liberal democratic ideals of justice, equality, humility and tolerance.' De Cruchy (cited in Balcomb 2001:14), according to Balcomb, 'has convincingly shown that Christianity in general and Evangelicals in particular have played a crucial role in the development of democracy at every step of the journey of this [democratic] development' (also Baur 1998:488). Marshall (cited in Balcomb 2001:11) sees Pentecostals due to their being most at home in a democracy as constituting a powerful force 'for the elaboration of a conceptual challenge to the power monopolies ... and for the articulation of strategies to create, exercise and legitimate new power relations and new opportunities for survival.' Siemon-Netto (2002) notes that Africans by becoming evangelical, and especially Pentecostal as well, 'are undergoing what Berger called a "process of individuation." With the erosion of collective solidarity people are constructing their own fate.'

The sociologist Max Weber ([Online]) argues that Protestantism was a key factor in bringing about the pursuit of economic gain. This was because every career was considered a sacred calling, which profoundly affected the view of work, resulting in hard work and the development of the commercial spirit. Christianity leads to Christians becoming 'more industrious and socially mobile' (Balcomb 2001:12). Max Weber therefore links capitalism with Protestantism, a part of which is the evangelical movement. In the light of Africa's poverty, this openness of Christianity to democracy and capitalism also encouraged the writer to pursue a dissertation that would include a study of African traditional religions in order to find better ways of discipling African converts in the Christian faith.

The moral decay in Africa is so serious, that unless corrected there is no hope of development in the continent. Mature Christians live moral lives through God's power. This was another motivation to tackle a dissertation geared towards finding a better discipleship model for the African evangelical churches. Balcomb (2001:12-13,15) argues from Christian virtues that if there is large-scale conversion it 'could have an influence on the level of crime and corruption in the country [South Africa]' (:12-13,15). Sadly many evangelical believers in Africa – and other parts of the world – have not lived up to the ethics of the Christian faith. This has 'created a crisis for evangelical credibility' (Walker 1993:214). It is the writer's conviction



from his understanding of Christianity that thorough Christian discipleship of converts is the key to producing Christians that consistently manifest Christian moral qualities so needed in Africa (and the rest of the world). Venter (1997:114) highlights the giants, ‘the silent dynamics’, that need to be overcome if South Africa is to become a stable, first-world country. Three of them are ‘crime, the erosion of authority and community disintegration’ – all requiring moral solutions. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is another giant needing to be conquered. Effective Christian discipleship leads to strengthening the moral will to prevent sex before and outside marriage, two of the main causes of HIV infection and its frightening spread. The need for a Moral Reformation in Africa and Christianity’s moral compass and power also motivated the writer to pursue a dissertation on how to more successfully disciple African converts in the Christian faith.

In addition to the above reasons for embarking on this dissertation, there was the nagging one of needing to play a part in making restitution for the negative impact of apartheid on the development of the blacks and on their self-worth and identity. Since the writer’s sphere of work is training church leaders, especially African Independent Church pastors, he hoped to make a restitution of healing to damaged personal and cultural identity precipitated by Western cultural, economic and political imperialism. The writer realized early on in this research project that it fitted in with the vision of the African Renaissance. This flowed from his belief that Christianity at its *best* and *purest*, achieved only through *thorough, transforming discipleship*, was the underlying answer to Africa’s problems, particularly the demeaning and undermining of African identity and their offspring racism. Further, if more evangelical Christians in Africa could realize their full human and Christian potential they would become less dependent on Western Christians, and would have the confidence to play a pivotal role in the growth of Christianity, both theologically and experientially, in Africa and the rest of the world. Again the writer was confronted with the need of developing a transforming discipleship model for Africa.

The church has undergone amazing growth in the southern hemisphere, especially in Africa. ‘Christianity is rapidly becoming the religion of the southern hemisphere. Today, 75% of Catholics live in the southern hemisphere, and the other Christian denominations follow a similar pattern. Potentially, this provides us with an incredibly exciting spiritual challenge’ (Mayson 2006:10). Many of these Christians are evangelicals. The growth of post-war evangelical missions ‘was an astonishing success story, but most of the subsequent growth

came from a new generation of indigenous evangelical movements around the world' (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:5). 'In Africa as a whole Evangelicalism is very widespread' (Balcomb 2001:5). The figure given for evangelicals in Africa in 2001 was 14.8% of the continent's population (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:19). Though there were many evangelicals in 2001 in Africa in the Protestant (98 768 000) and Anglican (32 329 000) denominations, there were 78 360 000 Independent Church members, who partially fit into the evangelical camp (:21). Balcomb (2001:7-8), who also sees members of the African Independent Churches (AICs), especially the Zion Christian Church, as evangelical, notes their large numbers in South Africa:

The fourth group of Evangelicals belongs to the African Independent Churches (AICs). ... This puts their [AICs'] membership figure at something around 9.5 million [in S.A.], or approximately one fifth of the population of the entire country. Moreover, in the decade 1981-1991 they grew by some 111%, compared to the other Pentecostals who grew by 16% and the rest of the church that shrank – in some cases by as much as 28% (:5).

Many evangelicals would dispute the claim that African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs) are evangelical. Tshelane (2000:150) shows that there is much legalism, e.g. 'Each service of the AICs is deemed incomplete without having said prayers together' (:150); keeping rules taken from the Old Testament, the life of Christ, and from the African prophets and healers, especially those given during annual feasts and conferences (:150-151). However, behind the different degrees of syncretism in the AIC churches there appears to be a basic evangelical position – at least in many. This is why Baur (1998:496) describes the Spirit-churches' doctrinal teaching in most cases rather 'as defective or exaggerated teaching than formal heresies.' Their 'practical religious inculturation reveals their point of departure' (:498). Clearly though the stress on Africanization of Christianity needs to be balanced more in favour of 'a Christianizing transformation of the African soul and world.' Daneel (cited in Baur 1998:498) concludes 'that many independent churches are moving from the periphery to the heart of Christianity.'

The implications of the amazing size and growth rate of the Evangelical Church in Africa are mind-blowing if every evangelical Christian were to be thoroughly and holistically disciplined. Such a movement would birth a spiritual and moral reformation and massive social, economic and political development. The writer felt such discipleship would include not only rooting the converts in the Christian worldview, but also ensuring their rootedness in their cultures.

This need for a quality discipleship because of its potential to precipitate an African Reformation was a further motivation for this dissertation.

The Evangelical Church's huge numbers and its continuing rapid multiplication, especially in Africa, presents a massive challenge in the area of discipleship of the converts. It is thus hoped that this dissertation will lead to a greater commitment to and a more effective approach to discipleship in Africa.

There can surely be no doubt that the most urgent need in Africa is the discipleship of all Evangelical Church members to maturity, a ministry long overdue. This need is not peculiar to the Evangelical Church in Africa. The Evangelical Church in the West is also generally spiritually immature, powerless and syncretistic, and therefore also needs a more successful model of discipleship consistently applied.

'There is a prophetic vision of a world beyond race, beyond nation, beyond sex, beyond religion, beyond selfish capitalism, a holistic world, a transformed world, a world come of age, a world that believes in love' (Mayson 2006:14). The writer believes that the universal Church fully discipled in the Gospel as understood by evangelicals will help realize this vision with perhaps some minor modifications, though only fully in the age to come.

## **2. The Problem to be addressed**

It has already been hinted at that the problem that prompted this research arises mostly from the nature of Christianity, especially as understood by evangelicals. Christianity claims a final revelation concerning God, humankind and salvation, and calls for an exclusive loyalty to Christ and his Gospel. A brief summary of the evangelical position is appropriate here (see also Chapter 2) to appreciate this: 'the Bible as the sole authority for belief and practice' (Askew cited in König 1998:95); 'a thoroughgoing commitment to the authority of the Bible' (Smith cited in König 1998:96); 'nurture of spirituality and holiness' (:82); a life based on 'the all-sufficiency of Christ' (:82); 'to become like Christ is one's personal responsibility' (:84); 'a definite experience of conversion as a personal relationship with Christ and active involvement in witnessing to Christ' (:94); Christ's sovereignty is over both the church and every other area, including all powers, visible and invisible; 'biblical fidelity, apostolic doctrine, ... *the imperative of discipleship*' (Bloesch cited in König 1998:94; emphasis added); 'emphasize prayer [to God]' (König 1998:84). The priority and extent of discipleship

is not only seen from the above summarized beliefs, but also from Matthew 28:18-20, Colossians 1:28-29 and Mark 8:34-38. The essence of discipleship is living under Christ's supreme authority and rule (Col 2:6). Discipleship can be described as the means to Christian maturity marked by acceptance of the authority of the Scriptures, Christlikeness, loyalty and closeness to Christ, obedience to and zeal for Christ, loving service, worship, an intimate relationship to God through Christ and the Holy Spirit, and prayer to God – thanksgiving, praise, requests and intercession. Clearly without effective discipleship to maturity – a necessarily lengthy process – is not possible.

Section 1 above repeatedly showed that Christianity in Africa has generally not been experienced in all its purity and power. It was also noted that this can be said of the Church in the West. This has meant that in Africa the churches' moral, social and economic impact on society has been minimal. This situation led Walker (1993:215) to state that in South Africa the power 'of the Gospel as a liberating force within the whole of human experience has still to be discovered and appropriated.' The writer believes that the widespread underdevelopment and powerlessness of the African Church can be traced back largely to the missionaries and their successors' approach to discipleship of converts: a narrow (focused only on the convert's internal spiritual growth), didactic, non-indigenous approach that ill-prepared the converts for Christian living in the traditional African world and impacting the continent.

The problem then to be dealt with in this research project is ***inadequate, inappropriate and ineffective Christian discipleship of converts in Africa***. The writer is particularly interested in the problem in evangelical churches as he is an evangelical and because the evangelical movement in Africa by its size and potential spiritual power holds the key to Africa's transformation. It needs to be emphasized that the writer is not implying that all discipleship of converts in the Evangelical Church in Africa has been lacking.

### **3. Proposed solution to the problem**

The writer felt the journey to a solution of the problem was along the road of a better understanding of the areas that impinge on the process and content of discipleship in the African situation. Firstly, a fresh and unbiased study of African traditional religions and customs was needed. For the writer this study was also paramount as he knew so little about this field of knowledge and experience. Due to growing up in the old South Africa he had

been shielded from the different black ethnic groups/tribes and prejudiced against them, and sadly all this was justified in most white families and churches. Clearly the problem, secondly, also required a fresh look at key Christian doctrines. The writer needed to approach the study of African traditional religions and central Christian doctrines with openness because of his fundamental/conservative church upbringing and the general mindset of the missionaries and their successors he had inherited. Thirdly, he needed to carefully compare the core Christian doctrines with the relevant beliefs in African traditional religions in order to better grasp the extent of the similarities and what were in fact irreconcilable differences. This comparison was also necessary to throw light on why syncretism had been such a problem in the African church and on where the discipleship process needed more attention and planning, and perhaps even a new approach. Fourthly, the writer felt that the problem reflected and stemmed from a lack of understanding of the place of culture in the human race and in Christianity and in human identity. Therefore the relationship between Christ and culture, including the influence of worldview on behaviour, needed careful study.

The last phase of the research project needed to bring these four strands of study together to arrive at a model of discipleship for evangelical converts in the African context.

#### **4. Sub-problems and corresponding proposed solutions**

The problem the writer wished to study had a number of sub-problems. The sub-problems and proposed solutions are as follows:

##### **4.1 The problem of Africans trying to experience Christianity in Western culture, and inculturation of the Gospel as a proposed solution**

The writer believed that the Gospel must take root in any receptor-culture in order to be fully experienced (see Chapters 5 and 6). It will be demonstrated in Chapter 5 that the New Testament indicates this. No person can be expected to live all the realities and joys of the Christian life through a totally foreign cultural medium.

Several authors have noted the need for African Christians to draw on the African sense of holism (or the unity of life), communalism, vitalism, self-respect, and *ubuntu*, in order for the Gospel to take root in the hearts and minds of African people. Whilst this appropriation must not be uncritical, or based on a romanticisation of the past, it is essential for the consolidation of a spiritually mature, rooted and deeply moral expression of the Christian faith in Africa (Kretzschmar 2002:43).

This means that for the Gospel to be effective it must be inculturated. But this inculturation of the Gospel in African cultures has largely not happened, or not sufficiently, resulting in converts generally failing to enter into a full, holistic, meaningful, secure and satisfying experience of Christianity. The outcome has been that Christianity has been found to be an incomplete and insufficient system of religious belief. This has resulted in some or all of those aspects of traditional culture that cannot be harmonized with the Christian Gospel being joined to Christianity, which has stifled the convert's Christian growth, or worse still, undermined the Gospel and the convert's faith.

The writer believed that if the Gospel, and especially the work of Christ, was accurately understood in terms and concepts from the traditional beliefs, this would make it easier for African converts to fully understand and appropriate all the provisions and blessings of the Gospel. A culturally sensitive understanding of the Gospel, especially Christ's mediatory and intercessory roles, his daily ministry to the believer through the Holy Spirit, and the supremacy of his person, position and power, would pave the way for growth to spiritual maturity. This in turn would make it easier, if not automatic, to discard those aspects of traditional beliefs incompatible with the Gospel, especially in the area of beliefs about the ancestors.

#### 4.2 The problem of writing off all, or nearly all, elements of African cultures, and merely avoiding syncretism and restoring African identity as a proposed solution

This problem must be laid largely at the door of the Western missionaries, who unfortunately felt it part of the evangelistic and church-planting process to demonize and annihilate every feature of African culture and replace it with a new and strange Western culture. The assumption was that all African culture was inferior and depraved and all Western culture was civilized, superior and Christian. 'The 'heathenism' of Africa had to go away as darkness does before light. ... Those who found aspects worthy of preservation were exceptions' (Chitando 2002:5). The writer does not believe that the missionaries' motives and work were all negative. The belittling of African culture was hurtful and offensive to Africans. This caused Christianity often to be viewed with suspicion and as the white man's religion, and damaged the identity and self-worth of Africans. The writer believed that a restoration of African identity was relevant to discipleship in Africa (see Chapter 5).

The African Renaissance is ‘a struggle to gain dignity and humanity and to express Africa’s need for a cultural identity’, to vindicate and consolidate African values, culture and folklore, and to bring social transformation and economic development; it is a dream of a new future for Africa (Louw 2002:75,76). This renaissance will make it more necessary to recognize (i) the reality and legitimacy of African cultures, (ii) the need to better indigenize the Gospel, but without syncretism, and (iii) the need to heal and strengthen the African identity.

The writer believed that converts should only reject those cultural features that contradicted the inviolable core truths or tenets of the Gospel (see Chapters 4 and 5). Further, he believed the Gospel should enrich the culture and vice versa in those areas where there is no clash with Christianity. This process should characterize the interface and interaction of Western and African cultures (interculturalization), where Western culture should not eat up African culture. Each of these civilizations has unique qualities, strengths and weaknesses. The ideal inter-relation between African and Western cultures would be respectful dialogue with thoughtful reflection on and evaluation of each other’s culture. This should be followed by ‘borrowing’ positive aspects of the other culture. In this way the interaction would lead to the improvement of both cultures. The writer was of the opinion that this approach would strengthen the discipleship process.

#### 4.3 The problem of inadequate application of the Gospel to every area of life, and a holistic and comprehensive application as a proposed solution

The writer believed that the Gospel in Africa had generally not been applied in a way that clearly demonstrated how all the spiritual and safety needs of the convert flowing from the African worldview can be relevantly, sufficiently and even abundantly met. This shortcoming had resulted in syncretism. This was partly the fault of pedagogical incompetence on the part of the missionaries, their successors and pastors they trained. The writer believed that the biblical teaching about one’s ancestors made it most unlikely that they influenced the living; rather that it was (normally) demon powers masquerading as ancestors (see Chapter 4). If this was correct, the convert needed to be thoroughly disciplined in how to live victoriously over Satan’s kingdom and be secure in Christ (see Chapter 4). The writer believed that if this was more effectively communicated and demonstrated to African converts, they would be able to successfully handle all life’s trials, calamities, illnesses, mysteries, fears and other challenges without resorting to syncretism.

#### 4.4 The problem of battling to see Christianity as final revelation and largely as fulfilment of African traditional religions, and teaching the difference between natural and special revelation as a solution

Some black scholars had argued for the equal authority of the Scriptures and African traditional religions (e.g. Setiloane 2000). The result was an unquestioned syncretism, which is unacceptable to evangelicals because of their understanding of the Scriptures (see Chapter 2). Other black scholars had argued that biblical teaching could be harmonized with, or at least live alongside, African traditional religious beliefs without diluting either (e.g. Mtuze 2003). Evangelicals find this to be based on a misunderstanding of the Bible's teaching and leads to syncretism which undermines or cancels central biblical doctrines with disastrous spiritual effects. The writer saw the solution in clearly explaining African traditional religions in terms of natural/general revelation and making an effective case for the inspiration and final authority of Scripture (special revelation) (see Chapters 2 and 6). Further, if the longings of Africans for fullness of life, for powerful living, for life after death, and for community during this life and after death, were demonstrated as fulfilled in the Gospel, the writer believed syncretism would be countered. He believed this is not sleight of hand, but the logical conclusion of the final authority of Scripture and its high point the Gospel (see Chapters 4 and 6).

### **5. Structure of the dissertation**

Chapter 1, as noted, deals with the background to this study, the problem that launched it, and the writer's proposed solution. It also includes the following overview and structure of the dissertation. Since the problem being studied in this dissertation is viewed from an evangelical perspective, Chapter 2 looks at Evangelicalism in more detail. The Evangelical Movement does not exist in a vacuum, so this Chapter also takes up the other worldwide systems of philosophy/theology, namely modernism, postmodernism and religious pluralism, in order to see how evangelicalism should relate to them from an African perspective. This is not irrelevant to the dissertation as the writer believes that even Africa is beginning to be impacted by modernism, post-modernism and religious pluralism. Reasons for the evangelical position are given in Chapter 2. This was thought necessary as the dissertation is approached from an evangelical perspective. This Chapter shows how relevant the modern situation is for discipleship in African churches.



Since the problem prompting this research stemmed largely from the need to harmonize ATR with the Gospel, Chapter 3 looks at key African traditional religious beliefs and customs, with particular focus on beliefs about the ancestors and related rituals. There is also a section on the amaXhosa because the writer worked primarily with them. African traditional religions and customs are not identical throughout Africa. However, Chapter 3 shows that there are beliefs and customs, especially concerning the ancestors, common to all black ethnic groups/tribes, and focuses attention on this common cultural core. The Chapter also treats the ancestral cult at some length because of its huge impact on African life and therefore its potential to mar the evangelical churches with syncretism. Chapter 3 was necessary for the writer to understand why syncretism was so difficult to avoid. It was also important for the writer to better appreciate the challenge facing the discipleship of new converts in the African context and therefore how to best meet this challenge.

Since the problem considered in this dissertation is also related to what the Bible teaches, especially the key Christian doctrines, Chapter 4 presents the central doctrines of Christianity, with special focus on what the Bible teaches about discipleship and the dead/ancestors. This Chapter also incorporates a comparison of each central Christian doctrine with the parallel area in African traditional religion and customs. Chapters 3 and 4 make clear the special challenges facing the evangelical pastor when discipling a new black convert. Chapter 4 also helps bring into sharp focus the reason for syncretism being so attractive and tempting in Africa, and why it is not permitted in Christianity. Based on the concepts of natural/general and special revelation, this Chapter argues for viewing Christianity as the extension, correction, and fulfilment of African traditional religions. The writer sees this as the best way to prevent syncretism as it rightly avoids treating all African traditions as Satanically inspired and undermining African identity, and makes it logical and preferable and therefore easier to embrace Christianity exclusively. This Chapter reveals further areas pertinent to discipleship of converts in African evangelical churches.

When the writer first conceived of this research project he felt that Christ's person and work should be communicated in terms of the most powerful ancestor who is also God, and in other culturally friendly terms or ideas. This would enable the new convert to better appreciate and respond to the role and ministry of Christ. It was also thought that this would make it easier for the new convert to disregard those aspects of ancestral beliefs and practices contrary and unacceptable to the Gospel and fully embrace the Gospel. This and other cultural metaphors

to facilitate a better understanding of different Christian doctrines are noted in Chapters 4 and 6. This is also crucial to effective discipleship.

Chapter 5 tackles the subject of worldview, culture, personal/cultural identity, Christian identity, other identities and their interrelations. It first conducts a general study of these matters before looking at the New Testament's teaching on them. This Chapter argues for a recognition of and a much greater role for culture in society and in the church. It also touches on the close relationship between worldview and culture. It argues that it is possible and essential to be an evangelical Christian and still be African. This Chapter brings many issues to the fore that impact on the problem handled in this dissertation, namely inadequate discipleship of converts, and throws light on how to better attempt discipleship in Africa.

Chapter 6 attempts to bring together the implications of the previous Chapters for Christian discipleship in evangelical churches in Africa. It proposes a number of steps for the evangelical pastor to take to ensure more adequate, effective, appropriate discipleship. The writer believes from his research that if these discipleship principles are allowed to shape discipleship of Christian converts in Africa, mature Christians who are truly African and resistant to syncretism will be produced and positively impact the continent.

Chapter 7 is a summary of and conclusion to the dissertation.

## **A Presentation and defense of Evangelicalism in the current Philosophical-Scientific-Religious landscape**

The dissertation is focused on Christian ministry in Africa, especially the ministry of discipleship, as understood by evangelicals. This Chapter therefore, firstly, presents a fuller overview of evangelical theology. Because this dissertation is approached from an evangelical perspective, this Chapter, secondly, presents a defense of evangelical theology, especially its doctrine of Scripture and its explanation of the origin, history and destiny of the world. In this apology the writer attempts to show why evangelicals believe evangelicalism represents the most faithful presentation of Christianity, and that therefore its voice needs to be heard in the academy.

Now Christianity anywhere in the world does not exist and grow in a vacuum. So its effective propagation depends on the church being cognizant of the worldviews, forces and ideas that shape the world and local cultures in which evangelism and church-planting take place. This need for knowledge of global, national and local contexts is reinforced by the fact that Christianity is a universal faith and missional to its core (see below). This means that African Christians, especially the leaders, need to be thoroughly informed of the philosophies, religions and ideologies that profoundly determine the contours of regional societies and sometimes major regions of the world.

The prevailing philosophical-scientific-religious context globally today, especially in Western and perhaps to a lesser degree in other first-world countries, is Modernism, Postmodernism and Pluralism, including religious pluralism. Africa has not escaped this virulent triplet. Modernism is rooted in secularism; postmodernism denies the possibility of objective truth and understanding of the biblical writers' intended meaning; and religious pluralism challenges Christianity's exclusive claims. All three therefore strike at the very heart of Christianity. The traditional Christian doctrine that has been most challenged and undermined has been the doctrine of Scripture, and this in turn has meant questioning and deconstructing other key evangelical doctrines. It is therefore no surprise that the influence of the three

philosophies/ideologies/worldviews, especially in the historical denominations, has disappointed evangelicals and caused a critical and defensive reaction. This Chapter, thirdly, therefore presents an overview and critique of modernism, postmodernism and religious pluralism. The implications of this presentation for the evangelical church emerge from this Chapter, especially in the area of Christian discipleship, which is the concern of this dissertation. Since modernism, postmodernism and pluralism have been largely shaped by their respective underlying worldviews, these worldviews are also covered (Chapter 5 takes up worldview and culture per se).

## **1. Evangelicalism**

### **1.1 Is evangelicalism a homogeneous movement?**

Evangelicalism was united in the tenets of evangelicalism (see below) until about the middle of the twentieth century. However, the swing away from this unity in beliefs has been only at the fringes of the movement (Carson 1996:443-489). Walker (1993:15) seems to see the doctrinal diversity among evangelicals as more widespread: there is ‘a breadth of variety among evangelicals’ stemming from ‘the wide variety of interpretation surrounding even the most commonly held evangelical beliefs’ (:17). Wells (1994:214) believes that ‘the vision of the evangelical church is now clouded, its internal life greatly weakened, its future uncertain.’ Murray (2000:2,3) states that the ecumenical movement was a key reason for this development in evangelicalism because it lowered the need for ‘fidelity to Scripture which liberalism had introduced’ and stressed ‘that the Christian standing of all participants should not be open to doubt.’ McGrath (1990:111-112) defines the central idea of liberalism as human beings and human culture are evolving towards perfection, making ‘Religion and culture ... virtually identical.’ Well-known theologian J.I. Packer (2008) represents the traditional evangelical’s assessment of the liberal mindset when he recently quit the Anglican Church of Canada ‘because he believes many of its bishops are arguably “heretical” for adhering to “poisonous liberalism”.’ Carson (1996:456) states that the entire history of the evangelical movement is not to be read ‘in terms of the more recent developments of some wings of it’. In this dissertation the point of departure is traditional evangelicalism, which is alive and well (see below), and the challenges it faces with reference to discipleship of converts in the church, especially in Africa where this study is focused.

### **1.2 A brief history of evangelicalism**

Carson (1996:456) states that evangelical convictions ‘have been central to the belief of faithful Christians in many centuries and traditions.’ Evangelicalism ‘has a long and venerable history’ (Yong 2002:239): ‘the Montanist movement of the second century, the Anabaptist and Pietist movements of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Great Awakenings in Britain and America of the 18<sup>th</sup> century leading into the Holiness movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Azusa Street revival of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’ (Balcomb 2001:4). The genesis of the Pentecostal Movement at the beginning of the twentieth century is taken to be the Azusa Street revival in America. Ellingsen (quoted in Carson 1998:96) gives a fuller history or roll-call of evangelicalism:

the Reformed tradition, Mainline Pietistic traditions, Holiness churches, Pentecostal Churches, Independent Charismatic Churches, Restorationist Churches, Dispensationalist Churches, churches of the Radical Reformation, the Free Church tradition, Lutherans and other mainline churches such as the Southern Baptist Convention, which is the largest of the United States Protestant churches and includes some prominent members of the Evangelical Movement like Billy Graham and Harold Lindsell.

Murray (2001:1) notes that in the sixteenth century during the time of the Reformer William Tyndale, the ‘gospellers’ were less commonly called ‘evangelicals.’ He (:1) then notes that the term passed into more permanent use at the time of the Evangelical Revival. He (:2) further states that ‘By the nineteenth century the Church of England especially was noted for its ‘evangelical party’, and its members, together with those who held to the same gospel priority in other Protestant denominations, became identified as adherents to ‘evangelicalism.’ ‘The Evangelical Alliance, founded in 1846, brought such men [sic] [evangelicals] together on both sides of the Atlantic in a federation which had no pretensions to being a church organization’ (:2).

The growth of evangelicalism in Africa, South America and Asia accounts largely for the significant increase of Christians in these three continents. Between 1900 and 1988 the growth was from 86.7 million to 826.6 million; in the West the growth was from 333.2 million to 594.7 million (Walker 1993:26). ‘Out of the global increase of 77,000 affiliated Christians every day, 70,000 (or 91%) can be found in Africa, Asia, or Latin America’ (Barrett *et al* 2008:28). In 1992, according to Adeyemo (cited in König 1998:92), the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM) included ‘almost two hundred denominations and mission agencies, representing over fifty million evangelical believers.’ The strength of the evangelical movement in the United States of America is

captured by Carson (2008:35): ‘ ... there are now more M.Div students in seminaries belonging to some branch or other of the evangelical tradition than in all other seminaries combined.’

Balcomb (2001:5-8) sees four types of evangelicals in South Africa: (1) ‘those who consciously locate themselves within an historical and doctrinal tradition that deliberately separates them from non-evangelicals’; (2) the Pentecostals (see below on how evangelical they are) who can be classified into Classical Pentecostals, Charismatic Pentecostals (in the mainline churches), and the New Pentecostals (mainly the “faith” churches); (3) Evangelicals ‘in what is commonly called the “mainline” churches, denominations that are not overtly or historically evangelical’; and (4) Evangelicals in the African Independent Churches (AICs). Walker (1993:17) describes five types of evangelicals: conservative, fundamental, charismatic, pietist and radical.

Pentecostalism has been described as a *Third Force* because it came after Catholicism and Protestantism. Though Yong (2002:249) shows that Pentecostals share features of evangelicalism (authority of Scripture; new birth and a resulting personal relationship with Christ; evangelism; and missions), he wonders if rather than being siblings in the same family, pentecostals and evangelicals are possibly to be understood as ‘second (or even distant) cousins’ (:251). Yong thus questions that Pentecostals are true evangelicals. If Pentecostalism is taken to be essentially evangelical, it dramatically increases the number of evangelicals throughout the world as Pentecostalism is world-wide in huge numbers. Another group has formed, called the *Third Wave* (led by John Wimber while he was alive), the first two waves being Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement. The third wave stresses the miraculous gifts, especially in evangelism, and is generally evangelical in its soteriology and discipleship.

Because of the unique circumstances in Africa, e.g. poverty, unemployment, crime, conflict, refugees and dictators, parts of evangelicalism have developed specific emphases to meet these needs. An example in South Africa is the ‘radical evangelicals.’ This group expresses ‘more liberative forms of evangelical theology better able to empower people especially in contexts such as South Africa’ (Walker 1993:29). Its point of departure is ‘the underside of human experience’ (:31). It takes seriously the context of the poor and oppressed and crises in third world countries, which shapes its focus and formulation. It is holistic as it relates not

only to ‘the authority of Scripture, salvation by grace through faith, conversion as a distinct experience of faith and a landmark of Christian identity, and the demonstration of the “new life” through piety and moral discipline’ (Costa cited in Walker 1993:27). Chapter 6 explores the need for an even more radical form of discipleship of converts than that championed by the ‘radical evangelicals.’

The size and fast rate of growth of the evangelical movement worldwide calls for its special attention to the matter of Christian discipleship, which is so important for the health, purity, survival and long term growth of evangelicalism. This was another reason for pursuing this study (see Chapter 1) aimed at finding more effective ways of discipling new converts in evangelical churches in Africa.

### 1.3 Tenets of Evangelicalism

Walker (1993:16) states that ‘there are certain basic elements which define its [evangelicalism’s] character.’ The evangelical Carson (1996:445) provides a summary of evangelical distinctives:

We insist that salvation is gained exclusively through personal faith in the finished cross-work of Jesus Christ, who is both God and man. His atoning death, planned and brought about by his heavenly Father, expiates our sin, vanquishes Satan, propitiates the Father, and inaugurates the promised kingdom. In the ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus, God himself is supremely revealed, such that rejection of Jesus, or denials of what Scriptures tell us about Jesus, constitute nothing less than rejection of God himself. In consequence of his triumphant cross-work, Christ has bequeathed the Holy Spirit, himself God, as the downpayment of the final inheritance that will come to Christ’s people when he himself returns. The saving and transforming power of the Spirit displayed in the lives of Christ’s people is the product of divine grace, grace alone – grace that is apprehended by faith alone. The knowledge of God that we enjoy becomes for us an impetus to missionary outreach characterized by urgency and compassion.

The Bible teaches that the Christian faith is to be life-transforming – every segment or area of one’s life is to be dramatically impacted by the Gospel. For this reason discipleship, the process of establishing converts solidly in the faith and ensuring their further growth, is perceived to be central in evangelicalism. In addition to passages mentioned above, Mark 1:17, 2 Peter 3:18, Ephesians 4:11-16 and the opening sections of most New Testament letters, bring out the urgency, nature and goals of discipleship, and the great effort it takes on

the parts of the one being disciplined and especially the discipler. The Christian convert is to be systematically and thoroughly taught to live all of life in continuous fellowship with the risen Christ and under his universal, loving sovereign rule.

It is the high cost of discipleship that turns many a prospective convert, including in Africa, away from becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. This cost is the giving up of one's autonomy, self-centredness, and some of one's culture; but positively discipleship releases the spectacular potential of a humanity formed in the image of God. Further, though Satan and all the demonic powers were defeated at the cross, they attack, deceive, tempt and try to destroy the Christian's faith and testimony. This makes it crucial that there is discipleship in how to handle the Christian's weapons against Satan. Such training and continued active defense against Satan's kingdom requires loyalty to God and his Gospel, resolve, commitment and discipline, all costly items. Faithfulness to God that is automatic and easy would be valueless, anaemic and hardly honouring of a personal-creator-sovereign God. This dissertation is concerned with the challenges that face Christian discipleship and how to improve discipleship in the African context in order to raise Christian experience to much-needed maturity so necessary for Africa's moral and economic development. The dissertation will be concerned with discipleship of the convert up until there has been solid rooting in the Christian faith and lifestyle evidenced in a permanent absence of syncretism.

#### 1.4 The story-line or plot-line of the Bible

Evangelical Christians discern a *plot/story-line* in the Bible, which can be described as follows:

God created the universe, and then humankind in his image so that humans could know him intimately and be thankful and accountable to him; the Fall negatively and fatally impacted humans and their history, as well as the physical world; God's redemptive activity through Christ's life, death, resurrection and ascension, is the only answer to sin and God's judgement as it atones for sin; through Christ, God justifies and reconciles guilty sinners to himself, empowers them for holy living and selfless service, and will translate them into the eschatological new heaven and earth, where they will be perfect physically and spiritually with no sin, suffering or death, and where only perfect worship, harmony, fellowship, service and probably continuous development (see Chapter 4) will prevail.



Some of the major themes and features of the Bible's plot-line are noted by Carson (1996:254): 'the God-centeredness of its outlook; its concern to deal with human guilt and rebellion; its emphasis on both the wrath and the love of God; its vision of history as a line that God ultimately directs and that is moving to the consummation; the significance, responsibility, and accountability of God's image-bearers; the primacy of grace; and much more.' Ryken (2006:10) captures the plot-line in four words: Creation, Fall, Grace, Glory. It can also be described as paradise lost to paradise gained. The story-line of the Bible can be captured from a missional perspective, inherent in the above conceptions of the biblical plot-line: it is the story of God's mission through his people in his world to bring his whole creation to perfection. The heart of evangelicalism is humans' inability to save themselves from the power, guilt and judgement of sin, and God's ability alone to save from them. This salvation involves the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: 'Redemption is the work of the triune God ... The salvation appointed by the Father and applied by the Spirit is accomplished by the Son' (Ryken 2006:32). Chester (2006:149), and other evangelicals, rightly therefore see the biblical story-line from 'Abraham to Moses to Jesus to the ends of the earth' as a thing of '[major] significance in human history.'

The Bible teaches the elements of this plot-line again and again in many of its diverse corpora (Carson 1996:283). 'In many instances these themes introduced in the Old Testament segment of the biblical plot-line are sharpened or heightened in the New Testament segment' (:254). 'And from a Christian point of view ... the plot-line must be continued into the new covenant if the old covenant is to be seen in its proper proportions' (:248). Letham (2004:4), after noting the New Testament principle that it expands on what is in the Old Testament in seed form, states, 'we may look back to the earlier writings much as at the end of a detective mystery we reread the plot, seeing clues that we missed the first time but which now are given fresh meaning by our knowledge of the whole.'

Evangelicals are committed to the importance of the Bible's story-line as the primary and controlling hermeneutical principle. They do not use a biblical theme as a grid when interpreting the Bible 'to eliminate or at least domesticate other biblical themes' (Carson 1996:290), i.e. they do not succumb to theological reductionism if some biblical teaching seems incompatible with some other biblical teaching or unpalatable to them. The plot-line of the Bible is in harmony with its worldview, and commitment to them, considered by evangelicals to be the only way to take the Scriptures seriously, clearly has wide ramifications

for the believer whose ethnic worldview is at variance with the Bible's worldview. This tension is worsened where there are authority figures on earth and/or in the spirit world in competition with Christ's ministry to the Christian and exclusive lordship over him/her. Clearly the biggest challenge to discipleship of evangelical Christians in Africa lies within this tension. It is probed more deeply in this research in order to discover ways to biblically and satisfactorily resolve it.

It is this tracing of a plot-line through the Scriptures and the belief in divine inspiration of the Scriptures (see below) that prevent the evangelical from treating Scripture as ever contradictory. Carson (2008:42) sums up this approach: 'read sympathetically, the rich diversities are mutually complementary, and, without a moment weakening the attention that must be paid to historical peculiarities, the *canonical* function of the text demands that we listen to all these voices and integrate them appropriately.'

### 1.5 Special challenges facing evangelicals in Africa

In 1975 Kato, a Nigerian evangelical, published *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, a reworking of his doctoral dissertation. It reflects a 'profound concern for the continuing growth of biblical Christianity in Africa. ... His thesis is that a pernicious syncretistic universalism is being promoted, almost unnoticed, within African Christianity. He seeks to call the evidence for this development to the attention of African Christians and to show how far it departs from true biblical teaching' (Bowers 1981:35). The finality of biblical revelation prohibits syncretism. He wanted a Christianity that was 'truly African and truly biblical'; and he aimed at rousing 'evangelical Christianity toward greater theological responsibility and involvement' (:37). Tienou (cited in König 1998:92) provides a list of the main issues that evangelical theologians in Africa have to deal with: 'the authority of the Bible, the relationship between the Christian faith and the traditional religion of Africa, the proper contextualization of theology in Africa, cultural identity, the issue of race and colour and the problem of poverty.' The writer of this dissertation felt prompted to take up these concerns and reflect them in a discipleship model. The challenge is urgent in the light of the weaknesses that have emerged within evangelicalism in Africa, which are threatening its historical commitment to a supernatural and holistic Gospel.

Modernism, postmodernism and religious pluralism (see below) challenge the divine inspiration of the Bible, its authority, the evangelical interpretation of the Gospel, the biblical discipleship focus, and Christianity's missionary motive and imperative. It has been noted that the evangelical doctrine of the Scriptures shapes evangelicalism. But can evangelicals make a reasonable defense of their view of the Scriptures in the face of scepticism and even antagonism towards it? Before going further with this study on how to strengthen evangelicalism in Africa, it needs to be shown that the evangelical position on Scripture is not irrational, naive or the product of blind faith. Failure to demonstrate this would make any endeavour to fortify evangelicalism in Africa indefensible. The next section therefore presents a defense of evangelicalism's doctrine of Scripture and also its Gospel using mostly philosophical arguments.

## **2. A defense of the evangelical view of Scripture and the Gospel**

Evangelicals carefully study non-evangelical treatments of theological subjects and respond ably and critically to them. But, as Carson (1996:151) notes, this process seldom operates in the reverse direction. It is a pity that the works and critiques of liberal theology by evangelical scholars are not given the attention and respect they deserve. Liberal theologians do not accept the double authorship of the Bible (human and divine). Smit (1998:313) notes that the single and human authorship view 'is often the case in society and the academy.' The Bible is 'reduced to a document with the status of ordinary literature' (:455). It is the evangelical approach to Scripture that ultimately distinguishes evangelicals from non-evangelicals. Some evangelicals, however, would argue for the infallibility of only the Scriptures dealing with God, humankind and salvation, but not the whole Bible (cf Edwards 2006:376). Murray (2000:173-214) argues that when evangelical scholars in the Church of England gained lectureships in British and American universities and seminaries in the twentieth century in the quest for intellectual respectability and greater influence, they focused so much on the human side of the Bible's authorship that the divine element for all practical purposes was non-existent. He concludes that 'the idea that the 'human' side of Scripture can be addressed without insistence on divine revelation was mistaken from the outset' (:184). Liberal theology has demonstrated that once the divine authority of Scripture is jettisoned, theology becomes 'highly reductionist and also very rationalistic' (Barclay cited in Murray 2000:185). The

Gospel as understood by evangelicals can only exist if there is a high view of Scripture where the divine factor is accepted in the writing of Scripture.

## 2.1 The reasonableness of the existence of an authoritative Bible

Evangelicalism and Islam deduce from the amazing order, patterns, and complexity of the various life forms, the exquisite beauty in the world, human personality and morality, that there is a personal, moral, righteous creator-God of infinite wisdom and power. A closer look at the nature of human personality is helpful to reinforce the belief in the existence of a personal creator God. Personality is usually seen as embracing the following qualities: awareness of being a unique and distinct individual (self-consciousness); possession of a will; ability to think rationally about oneself and the world, especially their origin, nature and destination; capacity to discover the laws of the universe and create unbelievable products; a significant measure of power over creation and capacity to care for it; ability and desire to relate to other people in loving and productive relationships; and a sense of morality. It does not seem far-fetched to conclude from these personal qualities that they reflect the image of a personal creator-God. Evangelicals ask and answer negatively the question, ‘Can morality, personality, and reality be reasonably explained without a personal, moral first cause?’ (Zacharias 2000:167). ‘Without such a source [the personal God on the high order of Trinity] men [sic] are left with personality coming from the impersonal (plus time, plus chance)’ (Schaeffer 1982:94). Now the existence of a personal creator-God is assumed and repeatedly affirmed throughout the Bible. This encourages the evangelical to take the Bible seriously and carefully ponder its contents.

The Bible not only presents God as a personal being who created the universe and human race, but one who seeks relationship with humans by, firstly, disclosing his divine power, wisdom and benevolence through creation (known in theology as natural or general revelation), and then, secondly, by communicating this desire in clearer ways (known in theology as special revelation). The latter can be discerned in the Old Testament, but more fully in the New Testament. Evangelicals believe that special revelation would be expected of a God who created humans in his image and for fellowship with him. They would also anticipate that God would set the parameters for his relationship with his ‘offspring,’ which is precisely what the Bible depicts. Zacharias (2000:177) states that humans cannot live without a universal moral law, which can only be generated if God has spoken. The human race has

shown without an objective, absolute moral law from God applicable to all humans there is no possibility of peaceful and productive civilizations. ‘The result is not greater liberty but (from a biblical perspective) less virtue. Where there is less virtue, there will be more vice; and more vice inevitably leads to the destruction of society and the loss of freedom’ (Carson 1984:84). These are still more reasons for taking the Bible seriously.

God ‘is beyond our knowledge, that we cannot fit him into our categories’ (Wilson 2007:47). Evangelicals, therefore, believe God’s revelation of himself – his being/ontology and works – must include analogies and metaphors. Such knowledge, though, would not necessarily mean it is less truthful, but only not exhaustive. The Bible fulfils these two criteria: it uses anthropomorphisms (word-pictures) ‘for us to know and understand something of what he [God] is like’ (Wilson 2007:57), and states that its revelation of God does not embrace full knowledge. Bavinck (cited in Wilson 2007:49) captures the paradox that the infinite God would want his finite creatures to know him as both unknowable and knowable: ‘God’s incomprehensibility does not deny his knowability, it requires it and affirms it. The unsearchable riches of the Divine Being form a necessary and important part of our knowledge of God.’ Thomas Aquinas (cited in McGrath 1990:55) sees no contradiction between God being above his world and revealing himself in that world: ‘God is able to reveal himself reliably and adequately in human words and images.’ Further, because evangelicals appreciate humankind’s finiteness and God’s transcendence, they would expect God to take the initiative in revealing himself. Further, because of sin they would expect that rationalism is not an infallible means to acquiring truth. These beliefs are found in Scripture, thus providing further reasons for accepting the reasonableness of the Bible. The problem of the knowledge of God finds its most satisfying resolution this side of death in the biblical claim that God revealed himself tangibly through his incarnate Son. König (2004:54-55) argues that it is God’s image in the human race that makes the revelation of God’s self possible through and to a human being: ‘That which is essential in God’s nature – his love, patience, faithfulness, authority, freedom – can become visible in the life of a human being, as the life of human Jesus testifies’ (:54).

Once it is accepted that it is logical and plausible that the Creator would make himself known and call for a certain lifestyle acceptable to him, it would follow that this revelation would need to be infallible. The Bible claims to be infallible through divine inspiration. The inspiration-authority view is ‘grounded in Scripture’ (Carson 1996:161). The Reformation

stressed this position by asserting that the Bible is not only God's written word, but that it is self-authenticating. The infallibility of the Bible is supported by many of its prophecies having been miraculously fulfilled, especially those concerning the Messiah. Evangelicals take the foretelling prophecies to have been spoken before the prophesied events. The unity of the Bible around its plot-line in spite of being written over many centuries and by many very different authors, together with the impact of Christianity in millions of lives and the world, further encourage evangelicals to accept the biblical revelation as accurate and true, notwithstanding the difficulties this position entails.

Further, it would be expected that divine revelation would be communicated in meaningful speech so it could be studied, and in a way that respects and accommodates humans' minds, level of development, freedom, wills, personalities and their historical settings. The Bible's view of itself is that it 'is simultaneously the product of God's mind and of human minds' (Carson 1996:151). 'The human engagement makes historical study of the Bible possible and necessary; the divine engagement ensures its veracity and authority' (:152). The evangelical thus has yet another reason for accepting the Bible.

How a dual-authorship view of the Scriptures can guarantee that both the divine and human roles are authentic has been much debated. This dissertation does not allow space for interaction with the scholarly material surrounding this issue. Suffice it to say that many gifted evangelical scholars have been able to find a home here, even though there is clearly a dimension of mystery to the double-authorship doctrine. A parallel would be that light to be fully explained needs both Newtonian and quantum mechanics, which cannot at present be rationally harmonized.

If God gave an infallible revelation it would be expected that he would ensure it was recorded, preserved and the inspiration of the record accepted. The Bible claims to be this record and the Holy Spirit grants inner conviction of its inspiration. This persuasion by the Holy Spirit of the veracity and authority of Scripture is testified in church history. Again the reasonableness and plausibility of the biblical record is seen.

'If God is the author of life, there must be a script' (Zacharias 2000:125). The Bible provides just such a script, which again points to its reasonableness.

Because evangelicals are convinced of the reasonableness of the existence, message and authority of the Bible, they find it easier to accept it as a book not only to be studied, but also to be willingly believed and obeyed. This also means for evangelicals that it is not a book simply to be critiqued or corrected or accepted in part. Further, the evangelicals' view of Scripture has unavoidable implications. As Carson notes, since the Bible contains propositional truth (1996:174) there 'is an entailment: both orthodoxy and heresy are possible' (:175). Further, the Bible presents 'Heresy ... [as] cruel: it does inestimable damage to human beings' (:358). Evangelicals thus take heresy and syncretism seriously. In a secular age (see below) in which religion is felt unnecessary, where tolerance of all religions is the politically correct stance, and where sharing and preaching the Gospel for conversion is frowned upon, loyalty to the evangelical's position on Scripture takes great courage. The writer hopes that this dissertation will stabilize and strengthen evangelicals in their beliefs, maintenance and propagation of the evangelical position.

## 2.2 The reasonableness of the Bible's plot-line

### 2.2.1 The human tale

An honest record of the human race is a tale of spectacular achievements, sacrifice and heroism, but also a tragic one of unfulfilment, conflict, crime, murder, division, revenge, inhumanity, alienation, crushing poverty alongside unbelievable wealth, materialism, immorality, HIV/AIDS, divorce, scarred children, delinquent teenagers, depression, oppression, terrorism, war, threat of a nuclear holocaust, anxiety, death, and ecological crisis. This list is far from complete. Higgs and Smith (2002:1) put it this way: 'The contemporary world is a strange place. Starvation, Aids, illiteracy, and serial killings take their place alongside sophisticated digital technology, the human genome project, the money markets of Wall Street and Tokyo, and unsurpassed wealth.' Pascal (cited in Ryken 2006:27) once noted that 'the greatness of man is so evident that it is even proved in his wretchedness.' This world 'is simultaneously resplendent with glory and awash in shame ...' (Carson 2008:49; also Zacharias 2000:179). Apart from God's image, Ryken (2006:27) directs his readers to the best explanation of this mixed tale, this 'glorious ruin': it is SIN. 'The Bible says that you are wonderful because you are made in the image of God, but that you are flawed because at a space-time point in history man [sic] fell' (Schaeffer 1982:219). Evangelicals are strengthened in their beliefs because the biblical record of the 'mannishness' (Schaeffer

means uniqueness) of humankind and the diagnosis of and solutions for the human situation are so true to life. The Bible's presentation of the world 'stand[s] up to the test of rationality and the whole of life as we must live it' (Schaeffer 1982:93). Secular anthropologists 'have signally failed to come up with answers, and by their very bankruptcy have thrown into relief the relevance of the Christian answer' (Milne 1998:114).

### 2.2.2 The Bible has a solution for real guilt

The negative side of human behaviour has bred guilt, real guilt. It appears that often this guilt is hidden deep in the subconscious or covered over by the toys and physical pleasures of the modern consumer and hedonistic society. Sadly in some extreme cases it is evident that there is no functional conscience, which is necessary for the experience of guilt. The secular world has no true remedy for this guilt. The Bible sees rebellion against God as sin and the cause of other sins, resulting in guilt. Further, the Christian Gospel provides a divine remedy. 'Christians turn to Christ for the only satisfactory solution to personal sin and guilt' (Jones 1999:75). Cleansing of guilt in Christianity leads to a new life of peace, joy, purpose and empowerment. Through a life dedicated to God, the Christian 'develops increasing, true self-fulfilment' (Milne 1998:152). The plot-line of the Bible explains real guilt and offers a sure remedy. The incapacity of the secular world to match this gives the evangelical another reason for enthusiastically embracing biblical revelation and its Gospel.

### 2.2.3 Christianity's harmonizing of a righteous, loving God and evil in the world is reasonable

Evangelicals believe that the Bible also provides the best explanation for evil and suffering in a world created by a holy God, namely Satan, a fallen angel and arch-enemy of God and his total creation, and the Fall of the human race. God is not the author of evil and the resulting suffering, but 'resistance to God's holiness that blanketed all creation' (Zacharias 2000:138). '... what clarity the doctrine of the fall brings to all our suffering' (Ryken 2006:30). If it were not for the sinful nature and the paragon of evil, Satan (see Chapter 4), evangelicals would find it very difficult to account for sin and suffering in the world. Atheistic evolutionists with their belief of the survival of the fittest can account for evil and suffering in the world, a world red in tooth and claw. Atheistic evolution is without an eschatological day of judgement before a holy Creator, which generally makes people less cautious about engaging in different forms of evil. It can therefore be argued that atheistic evolution can be blamed in



many cases of awful crimes, e.g. abortion, euthanasia, genocide and Lenin's brutal murder of millions of Russians. Wilson (2007:65) states that 'belief in God, ... still acts as a brake on society's slide downhill, which may be why the greatest atrocities committed in the last century went hand-in-hand with universal atheism.' But the atheistic evolutionary position does not have to harmonize evil with a holy God. Evangelicals reject atheistic evolution as a poor and irrational explanation of the origins of matter and life, requiring more faith than is needed to believe in a creator-God. Theistic evolution does not negate the evangelical explanation of evil, but merely offers an additional explanation; but it too is faced with the theodicy problem. The Bible teaches that at the end of the human saga God will finally overthrow Satan, judge the human race and put away all evil and suffering forever, which would be expected of a holy, loving and good God. This shows that the Christian God is not the author of sin and does not ignore it – both in this life and the life to come sinners are judged. But this doctrine does not suffice for many unbelievers. They are adamant that the existence of evil and suffering cannot be harmonized with a righteous, good God, and therefore this is a major stumbling block to belief in the biblical God.

Evangelicals are also shocked and pained by the severe levels of suffering in the world, especially when the apparently innocent suffer, e.g. when babies and small children are raped and often gruesomely murdered as has been happening in South Africa. But, as McGrath (2004:185) notes, the debate about what suffering has to say about God's existence has been 'inconclusive', 'is going precisely nowhere' and is 'completely bankrupt.' 'This attempt to deny God because of the presence of evil is so fraught with the illogical that one marvels at its acceptance' (Zacharias 2000:113; see his chapter 5 for his arguments). The atheist has no basis for talking of good or evil, and when he/she does it implies there must be objective, transcendent, authoritative morals, which must be ascribed to God (:118). 'Denying the existence of God creates many more problems than it solves' (Wilson 2007:25). In contrast to other religions like Buddhism, 'the Christian message recognizes the horror of evil and seeks to offer a morally justifiable reason for God to allow suffering' (Zacharias 2000:123; see Zacharias' argument on pp 123-139 of his book). Evangelicals do accept that the presence of evil in the world is a great mystery (:109), but do not believe it should demand the hatred or rejection of God. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (cited in McGrath 2004:184) reminds Christians that their God 'is a suffering God ... who bears our sin, pain, and anguish. The deepest meaning of the cross of Christ is that there is no suffering on earth that is not also born by God.' Jesus 'suffered the misery of its [the world's] fallen condition' and endured 'all the troubles and

tribulations of our present existence’ (Ryken 2006:32-33). Jesus’ death is to ‘substantiate God’s presence, right in the midst of pain’ (Zacharias 2000:135). ‘... God conquers not in spite of the dark mystery of evil, but through it’ (:136) – ‘in that actual brokenness, a mending would ensure’ (:94).

For evangelicals evil ultimately shows the glory of God in salvation and judgement (Zacharias 2000:138). Further, the gap between the mind of God and the mind of humans is so gigantic that it is considered preposterously arrogant to question God’s sovereign ways, his righteousness and goodness and permitting of sin and evil. It is ‘not easy to keep all these [God’s] attributes together’ (Carson 1996:291). The Bible’s explanation of evil and its judgement, its portrayal of God’s goodness, love, mercy and justice (cf the doctrines of eternal judgement and eternal peace and righteousness), especially in the suffering of Christ on the cross, go a long way to defending the possibility of a righteous Creator and evil in the world.

#### 2.2.4 The Bible’s absolute morals can produce a moral society that is stable, safe, caring and productive

The moral uncertainty and chaos epitomized at every level of society in the world today are exacerbated by a lack of absolute moral standards. ‘In political democratic societies, ... a society’s values, over time, will reflect the opinion of the majority of the people in that society. Or, more probably, will reflect the views of the political party that gets voted into power most frequently. Or, even more probably, will reflect the opinion of the few powerful “lobby groups” that work behind the scenes’ (Higgs and Smith 2002:125). Higgs and Smith (:125) give the removal of the death penalty in South Africa as an example. In the modern world ‘Morals become only a word for a sociological framework. Morals become a means to manipulation by society .... The word *morals* by this time is only a semantic connotation word for non-morals. What *is*, is right’ (Schaeffer 1982:231). If there is ‘an impersonal beginning, everything is finally equal in the area of morals’ (:294). Here once again the Gospel has the answer as it proclaims absolute moral standards summarized in the two greatest commandments in the Bible. If the Ten Commandments were genuinely accepted as a universal moral code, the world would be a far better place. In Christianity love for God and one’s neighbour is made possible through the new birth, prayer, Bible reading, Bible meditation and study, listening to sermons, Christian fellowship, pastoral care, God’s grace,

and the Holy Spirit's presence and dynamic in the believer. Where can one find a better basis for morals and morally-empowered societies than that found in the Bible's story-line? Clearly the plot-line of the Bible is relevant and reasonable.

The result of no objective moral standards in the world is an insidious, increasing depersonalization and devaluation of humanity, alienation in society and in the cosmos, and totalitarianism. 'When nature is made autonomous, it soon ends up devouring God, grace, freedom, and eventually man [sic]' (Schaeffer 1982:232). 'Democracy, freedom without chaos, as we know it in northern Europe, was built on the Reformation and it has not existed anywhere else, ... When one removes the Bible in which God has spoken propositionally and the resulting Christian consensus, freedom without chaos will not long remain. It can't. Something will take its place, and it will be one of the elites' (:379).

Chapter 6 faces the moral corruption festering in Africa. Evangelicals believe the Bible and its Gospel have the solution. The story-line of the Bible is about morally transforming individuals and through them society.

#### 2.2.5 The plot-line of the Bible is rooted in real history

Schaeffer (1982:179) lists another way in which the Bible measures up to history: 'the Bible claims to be rooted in history. Whether we are considering the history of the Old Testament, whether we are considering the history of Christ, including the resurrection, or Paul's journeys, it is insisted on as real history'. The Bible is 'not "just a religious book"; the Bible is rooted in space-time history and speaks of the totality of reality' (:179-180). The Bible is not, therefore, just a hotchpotch of abstract ideas that are unprovable and irrelevant to the world as it really is. It actually squares with the world encountered every day. Within its logical and comprehensive worldview it both deeply analyses humanity – its social contexts, predicaments, dilemmas, highs and lows, successes and failures, its good, sin and suffering – and boldly proffers reasons and answers that are intelligible, reasonable, testable and workable, and which provide hope for this life and the life to come. Because the Bible and its story-line are rooted in reality, 'whether it is the individual, no matter what his level of education, sophistication, etc., or whether it is the age we live in with the knowledge we have, the Bible is enough to give the answer to the questions raised by reality' (Schaeffer

1982:181). Christianity is not only true to history, but takes ‘history seriously as the arena of God’s activity’ (Bosch 1991:428) which would be expected of a loving God.

## 2.2.6 The plot-line of the Bible climaxes in a wonderful eternal future which ultimately all humans desire

The eschatology of the Bible resonates with the human being’s inner longing for a life without sin, injustices and suffering. Not only can the human mind conceive of a world salvaged from all evil, conflict, division, imperfections, sorrow, pain and death, but it seems so logical and right that this is how the world once was, is intended to be and will be one day. Evolution, science, ideologies (communism and apartheid are examples) and governments clearly cannot bring about such a transformation – a ‘new heaven and earth.’ The new South Africa that started with such dazzling hope has disappointed its citizens and clearly cannot bring utopia. Only a creator-God can bring about such a metamorphosis of the human condition, which the Bible promises. It is true that every imagination of the mind does not imply a corresponding reality. But a fallen human race is an all too familiar experience, and therefore conceiving of it becoming a true paradise hardly requires imagination. Rather it requires, no demands, justice, abundant grace and mercy, all of which are found in the Gospel. Yes, the Bible offers a sure hope for the fulfilment of that craving lurking in every heart for a future perfect world without conflict, pain, and brokenness – an eternal paradise in the presence of God. ‘It is in the person and work of Jesus Christ that we find God’s solution for all the problems of our sin’ (Ryken 2006:33). Time for evangelical Christians ‘is no longer an enemy, ... propelling them hourly to their inevitable end’ (Milne 1998:152), but a march to eternal glory. Again the reasonableness and even attractiveness of the Bible and its story-line can be seen.

Lewis, the famous fellow of Magdalen College, Cambridge, skillfully argued for the reasonableness of the Bible and its gospel. After he reluctantly dragged himself to faith in God, he went on to write many books, some academic, and some that ‘aimed at communicating the reasonableness of Christianity to his own generation’ (McGrath 1990:124). He said believing in God made more sense than not believing in him (:125-126). Lewis in different ways argued that there are deep human longings which cannot be satisfied through pleasure, beauty, personal relationships, any earthly finite object and finite persons or experience, but through them points to ‘their real goal and fulfilment in God’ (:126,128).

‘Throughout his writings, Lewis stresses the correspondence between human longings and their satisfaction through an encounter with the living God’ (:132). This is relevant to African traditional religions, whose adherents can be viewed as only finding their fulfilment in God (see Chapter 4). Lewis would say that God is the God revealed in the Bible, and the place of fulfilment is Christ. In the light of the biblical portrait of Jesus, this is totally reasonable, if not logically demanded.

#### 2.2.7 It is logical that humans should serve and obey God and find their ultimate purpose and fulfilment in him

Since for the evangelical the evidence for God’s existence is greater than for his non-existence, it would be logical that a creator-God would expect his image-bearers to obey and serve him. This is what the Gospel requires: ‘We are not simply to trust Jesus for our salvation, but also to live for him in everything we do’ (Ryken 2006:36). Humans sense that they must have a purpose in life, a purpose that includes playing a part in restoring the world towards its intended purpose and design (:36,41). Christianity through its ‘Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate’ (:39), godly living and eschatology, offers such a life purpose. Kyper (cited in Ryken 2006:39) describes this exciting lifestyle: ‘... discover the treasures and develop the potencies hidden by God in nature and in human life.’ It would be difficult to find a more significant, purposeful, meaningful and hopeful life than the redeemed, God-centred life offered in true Christianity. Evangelicals therefore maintain that Christianity is worthy of serious consideration – a religion, no the religion, to be believed and enthusiastically and gratefully embraced.

#### 2.2.8 Conclusion

The Bible’s plot-line is amazingly comprehensive and uncomplicated. The Bible provides ‘good and sufficient and adequate answers’ to the questions we need answered ‘concerning the world, humankind and ultimate reality’ (Schaeffer 1982:179). Schaeffer (:178) speaks for evangelicals when he writes:

The Christian system (what is taught in the whole Bible) is a unity of thought. Christianity is not just a lot of bits and pieces – there is a beginning and an end, a whole system of truth, and this system is the only system that will stand up to all the questions that are presented to us as we face the reality of existence. Some of the other systems answer some of the

questions but leave others unanswered. I believe it is only [evangelical] Christianity that gives the answers to all the crucial questions.

This is why C. S. Lewis could write (cited in Carson 2008:86): ‘I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.’ Christianity is the key to understanding the realities and mysteries of life and the universe. In fact, as stated above, the existence of a God who created a world for his offspring would require a script that includes diagnoses and solutions and direction for the drama of life, which the Bible provides (Zacharias 2000:125). The following quotation from *themelios* (2004:1) brings together the relevance of the Bible and its Gospel and the wonderful results when it is confidently embraced and applied to people experiencing the dark side of history:

These people need a framework which does justice to reality, the reality of the fallen world, the reality which is not simply a cultural-linguistic game but which presses in on them from all sides like a nightmare. Only a theology that has a firm grasp of the fact that the Bible speaks with transcendent authority of realities beyond itself, and makes claims that are non-negotiable and non reducible to semantics or hermeneutical games, can possibly speak to such tragedies; and yet this is the option which modern theologians have, almost without exception, abandoned.

The plot-line of the Bible can be unashamedly and confidently embraced without committing intellectual suicide.

Evangelical leaders working in Africa have a story (the Gospel) that all Africans need to hear in all its glorious detail and power. There is the further need for the converts to be grounded in this Gospel so that they can experience its depth, its satisfying answers to all their questions, needs and problems, and revel in the amazing riches offered in Christianity, and be able to follow the biblical road map for the journey through life that leads to an indescribably wonderful eternal destination.

Section 2 has shown that the evangelical has good reasons for the view of the Bible as inspired by God, as an infallible record of all God wanted recorded, and as the authoritative rule for faith and life. There is no other book to compare with the Bible, which so realistically, relevantly and with amazing promises deals with the origin, nature, purpose and destiny of the world and humankind and the conflicting story of the glory and goriness of history. Without

the God of the Bible ‘there is no story, and nothing makes sense’ (Zacharias (2000:126). With the Bible Christians have a super meta-narrative.

### **3. A summary and critique of Modernism and Postmodernism**

Below it will be shown that evangelicals have good reason to be thoroughly prepared to combat key areas of modernism and postmodernism. This need is made more urgent by their profound impact on the world. In the Western world they dominate all key areas of society, e.g. the mass media, government, commerce, industry and education. South Africa is not far behind, if at all, in the cities. More and more Africans are passing through universities, locally and overseas, where they are exposed to modernism and postmodernism. Since in Africa many of the academics teaching in theological colleges and universities and elite African political leaders received their post-graduate training overseas, they will have been strongly influenced by modernism and postmodernism. They in turn are influencing students and citizens respectively, causing modernism and postmodernism to spread. In certain areas of modernism and especially postmodernism, strains from African traditional religion are echoed (see below). ‘Africa is a mix of pre-modern, modern and even post-modern communities (sometimes within kilometers of one another)’ (Nkesiga 2005:123). Therefore it is just a matter of time before a wider sector of Africans partially or fully imbibes one and/or the other of these ideologies/worldviews. This process will be speeded up as globalization and the world-wide-web and internet further impact Africa. African evangelicals, therefore, especially their leaders, need to be equipped to evaluate and respond appropriately to modernism and postmodernism. This is essential as discipleship of new converts cannot effectively take place if these persuasive and powerful worldviews/ philosophies/ ideologies are ignored. The study of modernism and postmodernism below reveals how their underlying worldviews have influenced societal beliefs and cultures (Chapter 5 deals with worldview and culture). Such knowledge will aid African church leaders to better appreciate the African worldview and religions and explain their powerful hold on Africans (see Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6). It will also explain partly why the missionaries’ western culture so influenced their presentation of the Christian life, facilitate avoidance of this happening again, and prevent uncritical baptizing of everything in ATRs. Clearly this knowledge is necessary for effective discipleship of converts in Africa.

### **3.1 Modernism**

#### **3.1.1 Premodernism**

The Medieval Period stressed the role of God as both creator and ruler of the world, a world that was destined ‘to a specific eschatology and the final judgement’ (du Toit 1997:155). Due to original sin it was ‘impossible for man to improve his fate in this life’ (:156). ‘All developments on earth were part of God’s divine scheme and nothing could happen outside his will’ (:156). Perfection was to be sought in the life to come, not in this world (:156). Evangelicals, however, believe that growth towards perfection starts and progresses in this life, but that perfection is only attained in the life to come. The Medieval mindset was radically changed by Modernism, which was launched by the Enlightenment (see below).

#### **3.1.2 What constitutes modernism?**

In modernism the universe is viewed as a grand machine ‘set in motion aeons ago by a supreme technician, God, who engineered it so perfectly that it can run itself (Deism)’ (du Toit 1997:156). This view of the world came about through understanding the laws of nature – laws that could be described in the language of mathematics. This in turn led to the persuasion that a better understanding of these laws would mean the world as machine could be improved and perfected. ‘Progress is [therefore] geared towards the perfection of the machine’ (Rifkin cited in du Toit 1997:156). This led to the belief that perfection in this life is possible through the use of knowledge gained by rationalism and empiricism (:156) (see below).

#### **3.1.3 The Scientific Method**

The hallmark of modernism is belief and confidence in the scientific method to find objective truth (Higgs and Smith 2002:26). ‘Scientific thinking, by definition, involves the search for causes and effects for the purpose of explanation, prediction and the control of phenomena through empirical observation, hypothesis-formulation and testing’ (Kudadjie and Osei 1998:41). Scientists thus base their knowledge on what they ‘have seen over a period of time’ (Higgs and Smith 2002:5), ‘on sense experience’ (:9), on experiments and inductive reasoning (:121), and theories that they have tested and found to be true (:82). Du Toit (1998:12) also



concisely captures the nature of science: It is ‘empirically focused, method-driven and theory-laden, inductively and deductively oriented, systematizing and generalizing (formulation of laws).’ Modernism thus claims that rationality and science enable reality to be represented objectively (du Toit 1997:156).

#### 3.1.4 The birth of the scientific method

Sarfati (2009:12) states that ‘Informed historians of science, including non-Christians, have pointed out that modern science first flourished under a Christian worldview while it was *stillborn* in other cultures such as ancient Greece, China and Arabia.’ Klaaren (cited in du Toit 1998:16) has noted how science which developed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ‘had its roots in religious presuppositions’. Jaki (cited in Horton 1995:115-118) maintains that Christianity provided the cultural nest that hatched science. Christianity’s worldview ‘undoubtedly contributed factors to the mix that were necessary for the enterprise [of science]’ (Horton 1995:121). The biblical doctrine of creation meant that ‘if man is the king of all creation, then not only is he dignified, he is also given the authority and the challenge to study and manage nature in such a way that it will benefit him’ (Guiddo cited in Kudadjie and Osei 1998:47). Modern science could be born from Christianity because the Bible had ‘the belief in the comprehensibility of the world’ (Horton 1995:120). ‘Christian monotheism (faith in one God in three persons) not only explained the scientific facts (order, unity and diversity, etc.), but provided the only rational basis for pursuing those facts’ (:116). A belief in the creation of the world made possible the view that the universe would be orderly and therefore based on laws that provide for predictable outcomes on which science is built (Sarfati 2009:13). Milne (1998:94) sees ‘the doctrine of creation as legitimizing scientific investigation.’ During the Reformation the Scriptures were studied inductively (moving from particulars to universals and from effects to causes), regardless of the outcome, to find out more about the world. This provided the incentive to the early scientists (mostly Christian) to study the physical world through the inductive method no matter what the outcome (Horton 1995:116-117). Clearly Christianity is not against the scientific method, and any dualistic assessment of the relationship of Christianity to science is surely misplaced and unfair to credit to evangelicals. Sarfati (2009:14) states that ‘the Western world is largely living on the capital of its Christian heritage.’ He is therefore worried that pushing students into atheism ‘(at least for all practical purposes), undermines these Christian foundations of science (cf. Psalm 11:3). This ... will not improve science, but destroy it.’

### 3.1.5 The influence of the Enlightenment

Wikipedia (Enlightenment Period [online]) provides a helpful, succinct description of the Enlightenment Period. It was marked by a set of attitudes more than ideas. At its heart was a critical questioning of traditional institutions, customs, and morals. This stemmed from the fact that *reason* was advocated as the primary source and basis of all authority. There is no consensus on the date of the commencement of the Age of Enlightenment. Some scholars simply use the beginning of the eighteenth century. Others date it from the late 17th century, which is typically known as the *Age of Reason* or *Age of Rationalism*.

The Enlightenment ‘Intoxicated with its rational and empirical possibilities, ... tended to eliminate the need for ... special revelation and instead decided that science itself was competent to arrive at the answers to every important question’ (Horton 1996:117; also Milne 1998:140). ‘Now, scientists were the new high priests of human knowledge who possessed the key not only to the truth about “things below,” but about “things above” ’ (Horton 1996:117). ‘The world and the future is seen to be in the hands of human decisions’ – humans are the architects of their own destination – which conflicts with the evangelical belief that ‘God is directly in control, that he causes things to happen’, that he is imminent and active, especially in the circumstances and affairs of Christians (Herholdt 1998:216). Secularism, in which all thought – especially in the sciences – is emancipated from religious traditions (du Toit 2006:55), ‘ran through Enlightenment culture like a golden thread’ (:54). According to the most sanguine defenders of science, it and it alone, was on the threshold of providing answers to all the great questions which had puzzled humankind throughout history, including the questions that were historically addressed by religion, and it had the potential to solve all the problems that the human race was destined to face (Sarracino 1998:119).

### 3.1.6 The undermining of theism

The confidence in autonomous reason and the mechanistic view of the world due to the discovery of natural laws paved the way for deism (God is not involved in his world) and then atheism with the arrival of Darwinism.

Modernism effectively reduces (i) all knowledge to the results of the empirical and verification method of study (scientific method), and (ii) the cosmos to a closed system, a self-contained world that functions according to its own internal laws ‘with deterministic predictable precision’ (Herholdt 1998:220). The miraculous is thus impossible and so God’s sovereign rule over the world is denied – there is no divine intervention. The mechanistic explanation of the material world finally could dispense with God altogether because ‘nature is self-explanatory and self-explained’ and therefore does not require ‘a transcendent ground to explain its existence’ (du Toit 2006:56). It is claimed that ‘to date, science (which is based on empiricism), in its quest for truth, has given us no grounds for belief in God or the afterlife’ (Higgs and Smith 2002:14). ‘Within this method of science, the values, perspectives and personal faith of the person are regarded as of trivial nature’ (Herholdt 1998:216).

The Big Bang cosmological theory and the evolutionary theory, which fuel atheism (though apparently not in every evolutionist), have been hallmarks of modernism. Modernism firstly ousted God and then denied his existence. Hume and Kant and others have realized, though, that ‘the existence and non-existence of God or the nature of the deity cannot be determined by means of human reasoning’ (Crewe 1997:93) or ‘proven empirically’ (du Toit 2002:92). It therefore takes faith both to accept and deny the existence of God. Modernism had therefore no basis for its dogmatic stand against divine revelation, God’s intervention and his sustaining of the universe. C.S. Lewis (cited in Piper 2003) captures the arrogance toward God displayed over the last two hundred or so years: ‘The ancient man [sic] approached God ... as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man [sic] the roles are reversed. He is the judge: God is in the dock.’

The effective displacement of God in modernism goes against the assumed and accepted theism of the Bible: ‘The Bible does not present God as the conclusion to some logical proof, or as a mystery beyond comprehension, but as the basic premise upon which everything else in the entire universe is built. God is always our ultimate frame of reference, the supreme reality at the center of all reality – the be-all and end-all of existence’ (Ryken 2006:11-12). A true evangelical can take no other position.

### 3.1.7 Modernism found wanting

Modernism boasted it could master everything and then went on to ‘subjugate anything that is regarded as a menace’ (McGrath 2004:221). Science ‘methodically eliminated all entities not susceptible to its own established methods of observation and measurement’ (Edwards 1998:86). Its lack of humility, its aggressive and intolerant approach that marginalized those who did not accept its narrow definition of science as the only dependable avenue to objective knowledge, did not endear itself to all and invited eventual strong opposition.

Modernism’s claim to be able to build a better world – a peaceful and prosperous international community – has been tarnished by two world wars, nuclear proliferation, international crime (e.g. drug trafficking and enforced prostitution), the horrors of Auschwitz, unchecked ecological deterioration, religious fanaticism, and other atrocities, injustices and miseries. It ‘kept deferring and delaying the arrival of its utopia’ (McGrath 2004:223). ‘The ‘brave new world’ remains a haunting chimera’ (Milne 1998:113). Further, its technology made possible through science is not always good and beneficial to humankind. The materialism of modernism has ‘invariably failed to provide the directions and the answers which society has needed’ (Sarracino 1998:120). It has led to the ‘international globalization of greed’ that will ‘extinguish humanity, as we know it’ (Mayson 2006:7). ‘Our commerce ... has become our culture’ (Wells 1994:219). Modernism according to evangelicals has also had a destructive impact on theology and weakened and often emptied the churches where liberal theology, the product of the Enlightenment, has been embraced. ‘While we cannot do without it [science and technology] the challenge is to regain the spiritual and cultural values lost through this hegemony’ (du Toit 1998:16). So modernism, with its exclusive dependence on human reason and sustained claim that ‘only science can better our lives’ (du Toit 1997:163), has been found wanting. No wonder du Toit (:19) refers to ‘the limitations of Western traditions, especially the negative legacies of modernism.’ The shortcomings of modernism laid the foundation for serious questioning of the optimistic and confident claims of science. Evangelicals place their confidence for a better world in the Gospel. This is because they have experienced its transforming power and found it to have the answers and solutions to the complexities and intractable problems plaguing the modern world. Modernism must be viewed cautiously by Africans as it is not a panacea for Africa’s woes. This calls for the Gospel to be powerfully implanted and watered in converts in Africa by competent pastors, which means effective, informed and relevant discipleship.

It also came to be realized that the scientific method is limited to dealing with what exists in the physical realm and the underlying natural laws. Further, it became evident that the mechanistic view of the world obeying fixed laws, cannot explain all of human life. ‘Not all phenomena, by any means, are determined in this law-like way – and the persistent attempts to discover, for example, laws of social and cultural life (and laws of social change) have, up to now, invariably failed’ (Hammond-Tooke 1998:8). Sarfati (2009:14) notes that ‘Man [sic] can *initiate* thoughts and actions; they are not merely the results of deterministic laws of brain chemistry. ... his thoughts are ... not bound by the makeup of his brain.’ This points to humans having souls/spirits as well – that people are ‘more than matter’ (:14). He goes on to say that ‘Genuine initiation of thought is an insuperable problem for materialism, as is consciousness itself’ (:14). The scientific method is also not able to explain supernatural events or investigate the non-physical or spiritual realm. ‘... when we ask questions such as: why are there any laws of physics?, what determines their form?, why does anything exist at all?, we are asking questions that cannot be addressed in the same way that natural phenomena are investigated’ (Crewe 1997:95) – they ‘are outside the scientific domain since they do not address questions that can be answered by empirical studies’ (:95). Science, therefore, cannot find answers to the origins, purpose and destiny of the universe (Mayson 2006:7), nor can it ‘discover the ultimate meaning of life and things heavenly’ (Horton 1995:118). ‘Science and technology have a meaning and underlying values of their own, but their very essence makes it impossible for them to provide a firm point of attachment for existential questions’ (du Toit 1998:17). Finally it can be noted that science has failed to answer the question, ‘What is humanity?’ In spite of its vast knowledge of the human species, ‘we are still apparently no nearer arriving at a definitive answer’ (Milne 1998:113). Peskett and Ramachandra (2003:38) argue that the Bible has the answer: humans are beings created in the image of God and therefore have identity, dignity and value. Evangelicals rejoice that in the biblical revelation satisfying answers can be found to all the questions science cannot answer.

A further stimulus to postmodernism came when a further weakness of science was discovered: it can no longer be ‘scientifically or philosophically maintained that we live in a self-contained world’ (Herholdt 1998:459). The scientific method ‘has ... been ... relativised, especially in the work of Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend and Karl Popper and through developments in quantum physics and in post-modern critique’ (du Toit 1998:12). ‘... at quantum mechanical levels there are no well-defined edges’ (Zacharias 2000:68). Though the universe displays order, ‘it is not the order of a well-oiled machine but that of an infinitely

more complex constellation of factors and forces ...[of] apparent randomness or uncertainty in the basic structure of material existence' (Milne 1998:95). Another challenge for science was that the results of some scientific research produced suspect results: science 'can be wrong about the details of its particular findings and things earthly' (Horton 1995:118) – 'A lot of older scientific theories have had to be revised and even abandoned simply because modern scientists have discovered facts that contradict those theories' (Higgs and Smith 2002:11). Because of the limitations of science, Sarracino (:121) concludes that 'The dictates of the scientific method itself demand a continuing quest for new avenues of knowing and learning.' Evangelicals are truly thankful for the wonderful benefits that have accrued to the human race through the scientific method. However, the modernists' claim that science is the 'definitive method of discovering truth' (Higgs and Smith 2002:9) has rightly been challenged. This encourages evangelicals not to put their unqualified trust in science. As Africa becomes more widely exposed to Western science and technology, there needs to be caution about seeing them as saviours to all her challenges and needs.

Another claim of science that was found to be suspect was the claim that scientists are objective. Scientists 'are driven by a world-view, many elements of which are based on faith and, in addition to rationality, draw upon intuition and an aesthetic sense refined by experience and belief, neither of which are static' (Sarracino 1998:120).

Burgess (2001:43) quotes from an article in the *New Scientist* (1990) which deals with criticisms of the Big Bang theory. The arguments for the Big Bang 'have come into increasing conflict with observations. In the light of all these problems, it is astounding that the Big Bang hypothesis is the only cosmological model that physicists have taken seriously.' The formation of our solar system with its precise motion from a dust cloud, apparently the only solar system observed in the universe, means 'an enormous amount of faith is required to believe that the Solar System [including the moons] evolved' (Burgess 2001:53). Zacharias (2000:172) challengingly asks how from the explosion of singularity sexuality could have come – 'the enormous combination of intimacy, pleasure, consummation, conception, gestation, nurture, and supererogatory expressions of love and care.' The even more amazing discoveries in modern biochemistry in the different forms of life, and the large number of features of the earth that were necessary to make life possible, have opened the door to the possibility of a supra-natural factor in the universe reaching its present form (see Burgess 2001:62-70). It is now perceived that an expanding universe 'gives the Universe stability'

(Burgess 2001:60), which does not appear to be a chance happening, but the amazing work and design of a higher Power. Zacharias (2000:172) perceptively notes that billions of people have believed in a Creator-God 'because plain intuitive certainty tells them that something with such spiritual and physical complexity just cannot come from nothing.' Burgess (2001:43) believes that the underlying cause for the reluctance of modernists to acknowledge the weaknesses in evolution is atheism: 'The fact that schools and universities are so willing to teach a theory that has so many weaknesses shows that the secular world is committed to an atheistic philosophy.' As Lewontin, a Harvard biologist, puts it: '... we have a prior commitment ... to materialism. ... Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door' (cited in Wilson 2007:32). Evangelicals in Africa need to be wary of the anti-religious trappings of modernism and its unwarranted and suspect claims.

Another weakness of modernism is its fragmentation of the individual. It 'partitions each human life into a wide variety of segments, each with its own norms and modes of behaviour. So work is divided from leisure, private from public, the corporate from the personal'; even childhood and old age have been separated 'from the rest of human life and made into ever-distinct realms' (MacIntyre cited in Nkesiga 2005:151). This has undermined a unified and wholesome human centre. Another weakness of modernism is the belittling of the need of God or excluding him from the world or rejecting his existence. This has meant that if God did not create us and we 'did not make ourselves, ...we cannot define our own identity' (Ryken 2006:18). This has thus blurred self-identity and undermined the inner unity and strength so important for meaning, morality, creativity and a clear purpose (see Chapter 5). Further, as Ryken (2006:18) notes, the only purpose that remains 'is whatever purpose we make up for ourselves.' Dawkins (cited in Crewe 1997:95) best captures the disturbing scenario that atheistic evolution spawns: the universe has 'no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference'. Humanity is thus left with 'a feeling of the meaninglessness of physical existence' (du Toit 2002:91). The best future atheism can offer the human race is the hope that it may find extra-terrestrial beings who can remember the human race after its eventual extinction (Burgess 2001:124). The lack of meaning and purpose in life quite probably partly explains the following conditions in society: reckless abandonment to materialism, hedonism, drugs, sex, pornography, violence, crippling apathy and crushing despair. A combination of enough of these often leads to suicide, which is the logical high point of existentialism, a precursor to postmodernism. Put slightly differently, this confusion of identity and barren future contribute to numbing the mind's desire for a

sense of transcendence and eternal hope. It helps produce a monotonous lifestyle that focuses on satisfying the human appetites for food, company and pleasure, and hence the centrality of sex in modern society (cf the pornographic pandemic fuelled by readily available pornographic material on the web).

Mayson (2006:2-4) seems to take the position that all the results of science must be put together with all the religions (even secular spirituality is included – see below). He argues for humankind being more than just body and mind, but also soul/spirit. He believes that Vital Force is a good way of referring to the spirit or spiritual component or spiritual power ‘in all human life, community and culture – whether people recognize that presence or not – a sort of spiritual gravity’ (:2). He suggests the use of the term Vital Force instead of God because it is ‘a neutral explicatory phrase’ that ‘can sit side by side with the scientific revolution’ (:3). For him ‘Science teaches us to look for more of God, not less of God’ (:4). ‘The ‘how’s’ and ‘why’s’ of science and religion can be accepted as mutually fascinating, helpful unfolding revelations’ (:4). The evangelical would stop short of Mayson’s position because it is in danger of syncretism as Christian spirituality and secular spirituality (see below) cannot be harmonized at certain key points.

There is a plethora of books on the subject of spirituality that cover all religious insights as well as secular versions (Kourie 2000:9). In the latter case it is ‘considered to be the process of full maturation’ (:11). It recognizes ‘the meaning and values to which we ascribe, whether these be religious or not’ (:12). Spirituality ‘refers to the ultimate values and commitments upon which we base our lives’ (Griffin cited in Kourie 2000:12). Secular spirituality is holistic in that it also encompasses ‘An organic understanding of the whole of creation’ that ‘effects a sense of kinship with nature, instead of a desire to dominate and subdue’ (Kourie 2000:13). It ‘effects change at the cognitive, volitional and affective levels of the person, and it recognizes the complexity of the human being’ (:13). Further, it is ‘not a purely personal affair, but should be expressed at all levels of social, economic and political life’ (:13). It for instance has a new awareness of the value of work: not only the upbuilding of society, but also a means for creative activity (:13). For the evangelical, Christian spirituality ‘is the lived experience of Christian belief’ (McGinn cited in Kourie 2000:12), ‘is centred on experiencing and expressing our life in Christ’ (WCC Report cited in Kourie 2000:14), and relates directly to Scripture (Kourie 2000:14) and the indwelling Holy Spirit (:15) – Christians are to ‘walk in the Spirit’ (Gal 5:6). ‘Thus to be a ‘Spirit-person’ is the essence of [Christian] spirituality’



(:15). Dunn (cited in Kourie 2000:17-18) defines Christian spirituality as the ‘base of a *triangular experience* – in the Spirit, in sonship to the Father, in service to the Lord [Jesus]’ that is ‘vital, delightful, intimate and loving’ effecting ‘joy and inebriation in the believer’. Christian spirituality also covers the totality of life (Kourie 2000:19). Moltmann (cited in Kourie 2000:16) notes another reason why Christians see Christian spirituality as superior to the other versions of spirituality: ‘This mutual fellowship [with God] is for us an inexhaustible wellspring of strength.’ It seems the secular brand of spirituality is not only a desire for human maturity, but also a disguised attempt to acquire the benefits of religion without religion.

Chang (2008b) argues that modern technology, especially communications technology, and the fast pace and vast number of activities fostered, and even dictated, by modernism, have blocked out the true self and made it easy to wear a mask – ‘Technology provides us with a most clever and sophisticated mask’ (:316). Further, technologies ‘that were meant to simplify our lives have, in fact, become counter-productive’ (:318). Clearly this all tends to lead to superficial living. One area of this is human relationships that are not deep, genuine, satisfying and edifying. Further, modernism undermines one’s uniqueness by emphasizing the stereotypical and the successful. Chang (2008b:319-321) argues that each day one should for a time be quiet, cut off from all interruption (human and electronic) and listen to oneself to discover a much deeper part of oneself (:319). For Chang this means one will start to see the hidden parts of oneself and the power one holds dormant underneath (:321). Though evangelicals can see some value in inner meditation, they would not see this exercise as an infallible way to discover one’s real human identity. They look to the biblical revelation for this insight. Again we see another disappointing result of modernism.

There is clearly room for a relationship between science and technology and Christianity that enriches each other. ‘The worlds of science and theology, of faith and reason, of dream and reality are all in need of each other’ (du Toit 1998:164). That science needs faith in God is observed by the fact that science ‘has secured its place in society – in people’s practice, but not in their hearts’ (du Toit 2006:53), because it does not feed and satisfy at the deepest, spiritual level of humanity. Polkinghorne (cited in Horton 1995:116) states that in both science and faith we ‘seek to offer explanations of reality – things the way they really are’ (:116). Science and religion operate ‘in different domains with science dealing with empirical questions and religion operating in the domain of questions that are metaphysical in character’

(Crewe 1997:95). Clearly faith and science must work together and not against each other. Bohm (cited in Mtuze 2003:98-99) in arguing for a coherent wholeness states that science and spirituality 'complement each other as both are essential for human survival.' Edwards (1998:88-94) deals with insights/ideas from the work of quantum physicists David Bohm, Sri Aurobinda and Ken Wilber. Their work is shown to support the linking of the spiritual and the material (:93). However, for evangelicals the starting point is God, the biblical worldview and the whole Bible, which provide the framework in which science must operate. Piper (cited in Ryken 2006:15) states that apart from God nothing can be understood and that, therefore, 'all understandings of all things that leave him out are superficial understandings, since they leave out the most important reality in the universe.' This is where evangelicals stand.

### 3.1.8 Application to the African Evangelical Church (i.e. evangelical churches in black Africa)

Sections 2 and 3.1 of this Chapter have demonstrated that not only evangelicalism, but also secularism has noted the shortcomings of modernism, which led to the emergence of postmodernism. Postmodernism rightfully critiques modernism and seeks to topple it from its throne to a humbler place in the market-place of knowledge acquisition. Evangelicals appreciate any academic movement that questions and finds the major tenets of modernism wanting.

In Chapter 3 it will be noted that in Africa there is a belief in God or a Higher Power/Force that created, sustains and controls the world. Evangelicals take the view that this belief is correct because it is based on natural revelation, which is a valid source of revelation. Africans can be encouraged by the fact that modernism as a dogmatic ideology has had its day. They therefore do not need to be embarrassed about their belief in a Creator and a spiritual world (see Chapter 3). The arguments of apologists for divine creation can be used by African Christians to strengthen their belief in God; they will become more useful as Africa is more and more influenced by modernism, which is still very much alive.

It has been noted above that in modernism God is thought to be irrelevant or uninvolved in the world or non-existent. The result is he is not worshipped or seriously approached in prayer, which is the way Africans usually view and relate to God (see Chapter 3). In the West science is seen as the hope for a successful, happy life and society. In African religions it is

mostly the ancestors and adhering to their culture that are looked to for this kind of existence (see Chapter 3). These parallels indicate that modernism could easily find a home throughout Africa as a second line of ensuring powerful, successful living (Africa's cities have already been invaded by modernism). Africa has quickly taken to the technological wonders of science and is no doubt tempted to seek a solution to their many troubles in science. Evangelical leaders in Africa need to be aware of the power, failures and dangers of modernism, and build rapidly on Africa's belief in God. They need to play a key role in enlightening their congregants of the secularism of modernism. This needs to be part of the discipleship of all converts.

The Gospel is a two-fold answer to modernism: it does not precipitate the undesirable features of modernism, and provides solutions to those enmeshed in its many surprisingly destructive ways and to the societal problems and evil modernism cannot successfully resolve. Surely this should be good news for modernists and others who have rejected biblical theism. The need of a wholesome identity that reflects the transcendent, and modernism's hopes and dreams of producing a world ever advancing to greater heights of peace, security, development, provision, creativity, and experience, are for the evangelical fulfilled in the Gospel, partially in this life and fully in the one to come. 'Imagine what discoveries of science we will make in the new heavens and new earth! Imagine what music we will make, and what poetry! All the arts will flourish as they fully achieve their true goal of bringing glory to our good, true, and beautiful God' (Ryken 2006:43). Lucado (2007:110) deduces from Isaiah 9:7 that 'God's new world will be marked by increase.' 'Don't assume we will exhaust our study of God. Endless attributes await us. His grace will increasingly stun, wisdom progressively astound, and perfection ever more sharpen into focus' – it will require an eternity to view his wonders (:111). The new world of Christianity will boast 'the abolition of death, the utter destruction of the power of sin, possession of resurrection bodies, free scope ... untarnished worship of the triune God, the bliss of undiluted love and unblemished holiness, the perfection of fellowship' (Carson 1984:53). The longings of Africans reflected in African traditional religions are thus fulfilled in Christ and his Gospel. African converts therefore deserve to be steeped in the Gospel, only possible if discipleship receives priority and is properly shaped and conducted.

### **3.2 Postmodernism**

### 3.2.1 Accommodates the scientific method and also subjectivity in understanding reality

Postmodernism does not deny ‘the very real benefits of the scientific and technological advances of modernism’, but ‘is open to the mystical, the spiritual and the aesthetic’ (Kourie cited in Kourie 2006:79). ‘... there is no dualism between the external world and the subjective life’ (Herholdt 1998:219). ‘Queer and strange though it may be, postmodernism in some sense urges us to trust that which is older in us – our instincts’ (Higgs and Smith 2002:149). The postmodernist is ‘a post-critical person’ (:468). Postmodernism has an holistic approach to knowledge, accommodating even the trivial, incidental, chaotic and the seemingly irrelevant. Postmodernism thus broadens the epistemological framework to include human subjectivity as part of reality – presuppositions and aspirations are taken to be just as real as external objects (Herholdt 1998:216). In postmodernism, then, the subjective (non-conceptual) as well as the scientific method are to be combined in the attempt to understand reality (:218). The book of science (nature) and the book of God (the Bible) and the dualisms to which they gave rise, ‘eventually succumbed to the postmodern reintegration of reality’ (du Toit 2006:55). In postmodernism there is thus a ‘pluralism of logic’ (Marais 1998:169). The hermeneutic of postmodernism therefore also ‘has a great respect for culture and history: ... history “speaks to us” ’ (Higgs and Smith 2002:24). Wells (1994:220) is harsh in his criticism of the subjective role in postmodernism: it is ‘a complete triumph of the sensate over the cognitive.’ Because postmodernism allows a meaningful place for the subjective, spiritual/non-physical and historical, and does not rule out the existence and imminence of God and other spirit beings, evangelicals see postmodernism in these areas as being superior to modernism.

Postmodernism is ‘a perspective on the continuity between all levels of a multi-leveled reality’ (Herholdt 1998:218). It ‘asks for more than the recognition of relations; it calls for integration. A suitable metaphor for integration is the recognition that all things interpenetrate one another in a fractal (broken or irregular) way’ (:223). Postmodernism ‘hopes to heal the fragmentation of reality, often caused by analysis, systematization and compartmentalization’ (:219; see also Bohm cited in Mtuze 2003:100). ‘... everything is related to everything else’ (:224). It ‘is a shift from a study of things to that of pattern’ (Herholdt 1998:220) – of how the parts in a system interrelate, which adds something to the system (:222). ‘It is radical in terms of the conviction that the whole is more than the sum total of the parts’ (:219). This approach

to reality implies that ‘small changes and influences are of great importance ... Nothing is negligible’ (:222).

This is interesting for the evangelical because it acknowledges the non-material realm. Edwards (1998:88) is therefore comfortable with the integration of science and spirituality in ‘a larger and more complex framework within which to interpret them both. This may be called the method of expanded complexity ...’ The Bible provides just such a framework in its worldview. From what has been presented on postmodernism it can be seen that ‘there are ... points of overlap with biblical instincts’ (Milne 1998:143). It will be noted in Chapter 3 that there are areas in African traditional religions that overlap postmodernism, especially their view of the integration of the physical and spiritual worlds, rather than viewing them as two distinct or unrelated areas (cf Mtuzze 2003:103). Here we see how postmodernism could be attractive to Africans. Once it filters through African societies it will need to be understood and critiqued by evangelical leaders. This will need to impact discipleship of converts.

### 3.2.2 Absolute knowledge is not possible

Though postmodernism has a broader base for the pursuit of knowledge than modernism has, it argues against the possibility of discovering absolute knowledge/truth, especially concerning the future. This position is contrary to the evangelical’s belief in a divine, universally relevant revelation that provides a fixed, timeless and final source of truth about God and his creation and its *telos*. There are basically two reasons why postmodernism takes its stance against absolute truth:

- (i) its evolutionary view of the universe;
- (ii) its stress on subjectivity as a source of knowledge.

Reason (i) refers to the fact that postmodernism is based on evolutionary principles. Edwards (1998:88-94) deals with insights/ideas from the work of quantum physicists David Bohm, Sri Aurobinda and Ken Wilber. Their work is shown to support the new evolutionary paradigm that ‘what is, is a dynamically emerging, not-yet-completed whole, in the emergence of which humanity participates’ (Edwards 1998:91). This comes close to the evangelicals’ belief in progressive revelation and history to a final completed whole - life in a new earth and heavens. But postmodernism also propagates the notion of independent self-organization: there is ‘an intrinsic quality of all entities to generate order, to form patterns by means of the

flow of energy through a system'. It 'removes the theory of the "God of the gaps" because it promotes belief in spontaneous order.' Order and chaos 'serve as a source for self-organization and an ensuing new order.' (Herholdt 1998:217.) Order 'naturally arises from disorder' (Sarracino 1998:124). In Postmodernism 'randomness and unpredictability have gained a positive meaning as mechanisms necessary to ensure creativity and novelty (Isabelle Stengers, David Bohm and F. David Peat)' (Herholdt 1998:217). The world is 'an evolutionary entity whose final outcome is not exactly predictable' (:226). Postmodernism offers 'a vision of the universe which by its very nature is indeterminate and dynamic' (Higgs and Smith 2002:137). Clearly the evolving nature of the universe makes absolute knowledge impossible in the Christian sense.

Certainly from a human perspective the world is largely 'indeterminate and dynamic'. Evangelicals would, however, disagree that 'indeterminate' applies to God's perspective. This is because they believe God knows the beginning from the end, and that all history ultimately has purpose and is heading for a specific, pre-planned and final destiny. Similarly they would therefore also reject that 'dynamic' can mean that for God the world is changing randomly and unpredictably. Humans are able to study the microscopic and macroscopic pictures of their world, discern patterns of interrelatedness of elements and incidents, form new patterns, and thus increase their knowledge and creativity. Though evangelicals see this human process as dynamic, they do not view it as unpredictable from God's perspective since humans reflect God's image and are co-creators with God. Further, the history of the human race shows many constants like sin, tragedy, death, procreation, enculturation, heroism, sickness, learning, and creativity, which make human life in general rather prescribed and predictable. Evangelicals would generally view the 'chaos' that seems to operate, especially in the sub-atomic realm, as ultimately following some natural law or laws fixed by God. When reality is viewed from without, order and predictability appear the norm. When, however, the observer looks from within, e.g. from the sub-atomic level, randomness and chaos seem to rule. For the evangelical, the answer lies in a bifocal view that sees God at work in and control of both. Alexander (2008:343), a Christian evolutionist, concludes from his and other research in the field of the origins of life that 'Organization is indeed built into the very fabric of the universe.' He (:329-330) notes that though 'evolution is a wonderful way of generating both novelty and diversity ... at the same time it appears to be restrained by necessity to a relatively limited number of living entities.' He (:324) states that now in the scientific literature there is

talk of evolution being ‘predictable.’ He uses this feature of evolution to support God’s foreknowledge of the development of life species and that he has purposes for creation:

Evolutionary history on this planet displays overall increased complexity, genomic constraint and convergence. This seems to be more consistent with a providentialist account for the overall meaning of biological diversity, including ourselves, in which God has intentions and purposes for the created order, and render less plausible the claims made by Gould, Dennett and others that evolutionary history is a totally random walk that might have ended up quite differently (:330).

Human history confirms that every product ever made resulted from rational thought. Every product is the result of specially crafted experiments, analysis of the results, specific planning and finally the guiding and supervision of its production. The evangelical, therefore, finds it hard to believe that the world and its plant, animal and human life, inconceivably more complex than humanity’s greatest designs, have come about by blind chance, natural selection, chaos, and aeons of time. It can be argued that the work of scientists, engineers and manufacturers does involve a kind of natural selection, blind chance, much time and maybe some chaos somewhere in the process. But this is ‘evolution’ through the operation of rationalism, hardly the same as non-rational evolution. Du Toit (2002:90) picks up this difference when he notes that human cultural development and achievements are ‘by means of new inventions, novel fashion, historical changes, paradigm shifts and so on.’ Where something is stumbled upon by chance, it is merely an opportunity to rationally build on this chance find. This does not seem to be chance as understood in the theory of evolution. Further, most life species require a male and female in their final or ‘fully evolved’ form to propagate the species, which would seem to deny evolution as the mechanism that produced the different species.

It is interesting that postmodernism appears forced to accept more than just evolution as traditionally understood (no divine intervention), namely that there is also some underlying creative Force. Bohm’s ontology ‘presents another new way of speaking about the *deep structures of reality* that was simply not possible in the original Western scientific world-view. Now the criterion of what is real is no longer observability but intelligibility’ (Edwards 1998:94, emphasis added). Wilber (cited in Edwards 1998:90) sees evolution working as follows: ‘... literally everything emerges creatively from its ultimate ground which is Spirit or, in other contexts [e.g. the modern world], emptiness, or plenum void.’ The evangelical would probably see God’s mind or Spirit and providence as the ‘deep structures of reality’

and the ‘ultimate ground’. Africans would likely see vital force in all matter as the ‘deep structures of reality’ and ‘ultimate ground of reality’ (see Chapter 3), showing why postmodernism is finding a home in Africa. Alexander would share du Toit’s (2002:93) view that ‘What Christianity has always believed is not incompatible with the story of life unfolding in evolutionary biology. ... God is panentheistically present in, under and through all natural processes.’

Point (ii) above notes postmodernism’s accommodation of subjective feelings, dreams, mystical experiences and intuition in acquiring knowledge. Apart from the evolutionary view of the universe making absolute knowledge impossible, this subjective approach to knowledge prevents absolute knowledge as all the subjective insight of all humans would be needed which is an impossibility and because insights change. This approach to obtaining knowledge about reality resonates with African religion, and thus Africans would be attracted to postmodernism. African leaders need to be fully persuaded that the Bible is revelation from God about all reality and consequently is truth, and therefore a more sure foundation as opposed to postmodernism for what can be ultimately known about reality – physical and spiritual.

Postmodernists introduce another problem which keeps objective truth out of reach even if it existed. ‘*Gadamer* insists that one cannot escape from preunderstanding, prejudgements, traditions – all the things that one invariably brings to any interpretation’ (Carson 1996:68). This means it is impossible for the interpreter of a biblical passage to get to the original meaning. So even if the Bible is absolute truth, this truth cannot be recovered by the reader. Carson offers a critique of this position: ‘... our cultural baggage shapes our perceptions and categories, but not that no one from the culture may transcend those categories; ... individuals belong to interpretive communities, but not that the individual in such a community, or even the entire community itself, cannot be reformed by information coming from outside’ (Carson 1996:349).

So if there is no objective truth and no way of getting to the meaning of the biblical writers, what place do the Scriptures occupy in postmodern Christianity? The ‘text “becomes” as we engage with it’; ‘the reader “creates” the text when she or he reads it’ (Ricoeur cited in Bosch 1991:423). This implies according to postmodernistic theology that readers of the Bible are ‘not to discover the eternal truth implicit in the text’, but rather to be ‘actively and



participatively constructing meaning of the text from the perspective of the[ir] social context. ... creative imagination ... constantly making new connections and discovering new possibilities of human action' (Herholdt 1998:453). The approach to the biblical text Herholdt is advocating appears to go beyond finding modern-day applications of a text. The trend in hermeneutics 'has been a shift from the author [historical; exegesis] to the text as an auto-semantic unit [structuralism] and currently to the reader as the one who attributes meaning to the text [postmodernism]' (:456) - so 'a text does not only have one fixed meaning' (:465). '...the content of the [biblical] text is not seen as an exact and final explanation of any theological theme' (:468). This means that truth in Christian experience is totally relativized with respect to every Christian and also time. Such a view and handling of the Scriptures could not have been further from the biblical writers' minds. This disconnects the religious discourse from any meaningful debate and consensus.

However, according to postmodernism, not only human baggage, but also language *per se* is an obstacle to describing truth and accurately propagating it (see 3.2.3 below). So language is further reason why objective truth is beyond one's reach.

Clearly postmodernism is a threat to the evangelical's understanding of the Bible, which claims to provide absolute truth that can be known by its readers. Further, biblical truth is to be taught and defended and obeyed. If postmodernism ever overtakes the church in Africa, the Church's very foundation and *raison d'être* will be destroyed. Its leaders therefore need to be equipped for this challenge.

### 3.2.3 The function of language is limited

Postmodernism sees language as incapable of describing reality. The veil of language makes 'it impossible for us to get to reality 'out there' ' (du Toit 1997:157). Apparently language 'creates truth and the world we live in' (Higgs and Smith 2002:91). This is radically different to 'traditional notions of truth and language, in which language is merely a tool for describing a truth "out there" ' (:91). Postmodernists believe that art, language and mathematics are symbols. This means 'symbolism itself is our truth and our reality. If we agree to change our symbols we are agreeing to change our reality' (:91-92). Language is 'metaphor without a final meaning' (Herholdt 1998:456). 'Words refer only to other words. ... One simply cannot escape the inability of language to refer outside itself' (Carson 1996:73).

But why is language wholly arbitrary for postmodernists and therefore incapable of faithfully describing reality and truth? To illustrate why, note that c-a-t in English has been arbitrarily chosen to represent a certain animal. In other languages other arbitrary symbols are used to designate this animal. 'In short, language gets its meaning from rules of consensus that are entirely arbitrary in the way they "work" ' (Higgs and Smith 2002:136). This means to postmodernists that 'human beings arrangement of "reality" in language was not based on some form of dependable, concrete, objective logic or rationality at all' (:136). But it seems that postmodernism has failed to appreciate that if 'cat' is always used to describe a certain furry, small animal that makes a good pet (when willing!), this is hardly an arbitrary function of the word 'cat' – the word refers to a real object. Hume, a contemporary literary theorist, can declare that 'literature bears an inescapable resemblance to reality, and the more the literary work tells a story, the more necessary the presence of the real' (cited in Marais 1998:24). 'Commitment in literature has the implication that a text is engaged with reality and - this is the point – that elements from reality can to such an extent be represented in a text that it can communicate the commitment of the writer' (Marais 1998:30). Marais argues that every text has or projects an internal field of reference and that 'the *internal field of reference* is modeled on reality and that it stands in some representational relationship towards reality' (:54). 'The reader has to enter the internal fields of reference, and from within these fields of reference, the truth-claims of the text are to be judged' (:172).

The genius of language is that it makes possible communication about things without having to have them present. It can also describe ways of reasoning and abstract ideas. Language does not act as a mist over the things, matters or ideas it purports to describe; neither is it powerless to accurately describe these. Marais (1998:4) perceptively asks the question: 'What if reality in fact does exist and does play a constitutive role in the construction of literary texts?'

It is hard to believe that humanity could have advanced so far scientifically and technologically, successfully passed on vast amounts of knowledge through language, both orally and especially in written works, and built ordered, interactive and productive societies, if postmodernism is correct about language. The reductionism of language in postmodernism reflects a radical scepticism that hardly seems justified or helpful.

Once again the threat of postmodernism to Christianity can be seen in its undermining of the traditionally understood function of language and thus the Bible.

### 3.2.4 Postmodern Christian theologians cannot escape the authority of the Bible

Postmodern biblical hermeneutics do not deny the existence of God. Rather, experiencing God in daily life is encouraged. The Bible appears to be given in some sense the role of a yardstick or regulator as the following quotations show:

‘The metaphors of the Bible, like Jesus as the resurrection and the truth, God as Father and friend, the good shepherd, and the light of the world all serve an explanatory purpose. This leaves room for the possibility of new metaphors that are *congruent with that of the Bible* because the concept “God” is not exhausted by certain metaphors’ (Herholdt 1998:468, emphasis added). We are to ‘*enter into the reality of the Bible* and to experience it as his/her own story’ (:468, emphasis added). ‘There are no clear boundaries or final statements, and consequently the God who speaks in the Bible, speaks again when we speak into our own situation *on the basis of what we read in the Bible*’ (:469, emphasis added); ‘The *[biblical] text ... becomes a hermeneutical aid* in the understanding of present experience’ (Ebeling quoted in Carson 1996:71, emphasis added). ‘The truth is therefore an applied truth that must function in the following sense: Providing meaning, intelligibility, and answering anomalies. This can only be authentic if there is an *objective reference to the world of the text as the reality that pertains to the divine*’ (Herholdt 1998:467, emphasis added).

Why should the Bible be a controlling construct if it serves only ‘as an example of the way in which people experienced and understood God in the past’ (Herholdt 1998:468)? It is clear that the postmodernist Herholdt cannot escape the need of an authoritative standard for belief and religious behaviour – the Bible in the case of Christianity. If he is consistent, then the Bible should not be viewed in some way as normative or regulative, as everybody’s life experiences, including the Apostles Paul’s and Peter’s, etc, are according to him relative. God only works by ‘his immanent participation and persuasive love’ (:468). This seems the perfect recipe for confusion regarding the knowledge of God; and a pathway to polytheism because not all interpretations of people’s experiences will be harmonizable into a coherent knowledge of one God and his ways in the world. Postmodern theologians want the Bible and also, it appears, the freedom to create novelty in their beliefs about God. But Herholdt got his idea of

the love of God from the Bible, indicating its final authority; and therefore to be consistent he should give the Bible final revelatory status when considering God's other attributes, e.g. justice, mercy, grace and anger at sin.

### 3.2.5 Some dangers of postmodernism

Feelings and present experiences are not primary for Christians (Milne 1998:143) unlike in postmodernism. Wells (1994:222) is concerned that there is some experimentation with postmodernism in some evangelical churches, and sees the day when 'evangelical spirituality will become indistinguishable from New Age spirituality.' There 'are peculiar and sinister dangers in a world shaped not by considered thought but by image and gut-feelings. These dangers relate to civil society and the rule of law' (Letham 2004:7). 'If all is a giant language game, we have removed any basis for rejecting ideas that are morally repugnant. If there is no basis for morality, the immoral does not exist. ... If emotions trump reason we have no rational grounds for anything' (:8). Clearly postmodernism if pushed to its logical extremity would lead to anarchy where evil triumphs. Postmodernism thus fails to provide any solid foundation to build one's life upon, to erect a life with meaning and direction. Further, 'society is no more and no less than a series of unique, irrepeatable and chance encounters between human beings' (Higgs and Smith 2002:91). 'In reality human beings cannot live without objective meaning or absolute truth [and morals]. Life disintegrates without it' (:8). Postmodernism sure does not gel with existence as actually experienced.

### 3.2.6 Final critique of postmodernism

Postmodernism rightly appreciated the limitations of modernism and that some problems were even caused by it. But as far as the evangelical is concerned, postmodernism's initial concerns and motivation have been spoilt by its own dogmatism and scepticism. It opens the door to a fresh and positive approach to the spirit world and biblical revelation, but then seems to slam it closed against the possibility of the Bible providing the human race with dependable knowledge, especially on the big questions tackled by worldviews (see Chapter 5). Meek (cited in Carson 2008:93) sees postmodernism as 'the newest capitulation to scepticism' because it allows 'no absolute truth, no metanarrative, no single grand story, no single way-things-are.'

It has been noted that a postmodern person ‘will not approach the Bible as if it contains some body of truth that needs to be discovered. Truth lies rather within the relationship of the reader with the text. Truth is therefore not prefabricated, but dynamic and co-determined by the needs, presuppositions, religious background and cultural heritage that the person brings to the Bible’ (Herholdt 1998:467). Evangelicals do believe in making absolute truth relevant to different contemporary and contextual circumstances; but this is not quite what postmodern theological hermeneutics aims at. Evangelicals see postmodernism as exchanging the biblical God, and his clear, authoritative and relevant revelation, for a god determined by one’s situation in life and untrustworthy subjectivity and the nebulous knowledge that results.

It is hard not to come to the conclusion that postmodernism is more a ‘philosophy, a worldview, a fundamentally religious worldview’ (Letham 2004:8). Further, the method of postmodernism is suspect: its distrust of ideology now has ideological status (:6). ‘It denies and deconstructs absolute truth claims yet its own claims are absolute, excluded from the relativism it foists on those of others’ (:8). It makes a frontal attack on the role of reason in modernism, yet ‘employs a highly sophisticated rational argumentation to make its case’ (Milne 1998:141). Some evangelical scholars have even called postmodernism ‘nonsense.’ The evangelical feels that it is dangerous to build one’s life on a largely unproved theory of language, reality, knowledge and experience that is recklessly sceptical and which is anti-biblical.

Carson (1996:136) offers harsh criticism of postmodernism: ‘Postmodernism defines itself most clearly in terms of what it isn’t – and that inevitably means a critique of the past. It has nowhere to go, for it has no vision of transcendent reality pulling us onward. It is all rather sad and pathetic.’ Higgs and Smith (2002:146) posit the birth of postmodernism as ‘a sense of bewilderment, disillusionment and panic.’ Evangelicals know that the Christian Gospel speaks critically of much of the past, but the plot-line of the Bible exudes joy and hope for the future and enriches the present with meaning and purpose.

Postmodernists struggle with human identity. This is because their identity is evolving and because it is obscured in words and linguistic symbols unable to describe reality. Any description of their identity can never be ‘core’ descriptions. (Higgs and Smith 2002:144-146.) Instead of encountering the ‘I’, there is ‘only the endless repetition of arbitrary symbols which we are doomed to hear throughout our lives’ (:146). Evangelicals are persuaded that to

disconnect the universe and humanity from a personal creator-God as in modernism or essentially merge them as in postmodernism, are the roots of all identity crises, alienation, lostness and unfulfilment. This rupture or fusion guarantees ignorance of who or what one is supposed to be. Through slavery, colonialism, apartheid, and Western economic and cultural imperialism, Africans have had their identity mutilated. They hardly need postmodernism which would add more confusion to their identity.

Evangelicals have found their true selves through the Bible and its Gospel, and how to live the authentic life in a process of growth towards Christlikeness in the community of the Church. It has been noted that the individualism fostered by modernism, and to a lesser extent postmodernism, has ‘projected the modern person into ... uncharted waters of extreme isolation’ (Milne 1998:141). Wells (1994:217) sees the postmodern personality as ‘actually rooted in the slow disintegration of the family that began at least a hundred years ago.’ Nolan’s (2009:60) comments on individualism based on extensive research are insightful: the effects ‘include alienation, loneliness, lovelessness, unhappiness and inability to maintain relationships.’ Africa does not need destructive individualism and the church needs protection from it.

For the evangelical the greatest concern about both modernism and postmodernism is the atheism they seem to encourage. Though this dissertation cannot accommodate a discussion of the theism-atheism debate, it is interesting that many scientists find themselves ‘drawn towards a view that accepts the existence of God and the reality of the human soul. ... a remarkable development of modern science ... destined to become acknowledged as a feature of physical reality’ (Sarracino 1998:127). Scientists surveyed in 1916 and 1996 revealed that about 40% of them ‘had some form of personal religious beliefs’ (McGrath 2004:111). This cut ‘the ground from under those who argued that the natural sciences are necessarily atheistic’ (:111). ‘The simple fact is that interest in religion has grown globally since the high-water mark of secularism in the 1970s, even in the heartlands of the West’ (:190). McGrath (2004) argues in his book that ‘A major determinant for atheism is whether a sense of the divine has been eliminated from a culture. The absence of any expectation of encountering the divine directly through nature or in personal experience inevitably encourages belief in a godless world – a world that lives ... “as if God did not exist” ’ (:206). ‘Whereas the medieval world was arranged around the church ... today the church takes its cue from the [secular] world’ (du Toit 2006:51). Atheism, according to McGrath, is therefore an indictment against

the Protestant Church because it 'brought about precisely such an erosion of any sense of direct encounter with the divine' (McGrath 2004:206).

It has been briefly noted how similar in places the worldview of postmodernism is to the Africans' worldview (see also Chapter 4). Postmodernism does not accept an authoritative Bible claiming propositional truth and embraces subjective insights. This seems to parallel Africa's lack of a written bible and trust in subjective revelation stemming from belief in and experience of the spirit world (see Chapter 3). Thus aspects of postmodernism resonate with Africa's worldview and therefore Africa is fertile ground for postmodernism. Another reason why postmodernism is beginning to find a home in Africa is its embrace of diversity and relativism, which would mean African traditional religions (ATRs) could be viewed as valid or authoritative as the Bible. This would mean Africans could unashamedly maintain all their traditions. Cultural diversity is consonant with the New Testament's view of a multiracial and multicultural church and a healthy self-identity (see Chapter 5), but without syncretism.

Evangelicals working on the African continent, especially among tertiary-educated blacks who have been and are being exposed directly or indirectly to postmodernism, will need to be cognizant of its underlying worldview and scepticism and be able to critique it in the light of the biblical worldview and Gospel. African leaders need to be clear that not only modernism and postmodernism need to be judged by the biblical revelation, but also Africa's worldview, religions and cultures and all the other worldviews and religious and cultural systems throughout the world. This understanding is essential in converts in order to be faithful to Christ and avoid syncretism which is forbidden (see Chapter 4). Discipleship of evangelical converts in Africa clearly needs to equip them to resist the inroads of postmodernism in order to ensure their faithfulness to Christ (see Chapter 4).

#### **4. Can Evangelicals defend their Exclusivism in the present religious pluralistic climate?**

After the African national Congress' success in the General Election in 2004, Thabo Mbeki was sworn in as president at a multi-million rand inauguration before kings, presidents, other dignitaries from around the world, and about forty thousand South Africans (excluding those South Africans and others who watched the proceedings on television). An eager and

extensive world media fêted the watching world with an extravaganza that high-lighted South Africa's success story, destined to dwarf other African stories. The occasion was clearly meant to impress the world-wide audience and to show that the South African nation was a truly modern one in the forefront of political and social change. After the official appointment of Mbeki to the presidency of South Africa, prayers were offered by representatives of all the major religions in South Africa. This demonstrated that religious pluralism today is the politically correct way to deal with the spiritual dimension in multi-religious societies – 'The South African government has adopted a pluralist approach to religion as part of a political global trend, except in [African] Islamic countries' (Nkesiga 2005:123). Clearly this matter cannot escape the attention of evangelicals with their view of final revelation in Christ. Pluralism is finding an ideal breeding ground in Africa as it raises the profile of African traditional religions, especially in the media, and encourages their acceptance. Mbeki's stress on the African Renaissance has strengthened religious pluralism and vice versa in Africa, especially South Africa. African evangelical leaders need to understand pluralism so as to avoid syncretism, which is not permitted by the biblical revelation.

#### **4.1 Empirical, cherished and philosophical pluralism**

Carson (1996) divides pluralism into *empirical*, *cherished*, and *philosophical* or *hermeneutical pluralism*. Empirical pluralism refers to 'the sheer diversity of race, value systems, heritage, language, culture, and religion in many western and some other nations' (:13). Cherished pluralism refers to the very positive attitude many citizens, especially the intellectuals and controllers of the media, have towards empirical pluralism (:18-19). Philosophical/hermeneutical pluralism supports the notion that it is necessarily wrong to state that a particular ideology or culture or religion is intrinsically superior to another. The only absolute creed is the creed of pluralism. Pluralism represents a shift from tolerating people to tolerating their ideas (:32).

Carson (1996:26-27) notes that philosophical/hermeneutical pluralism has resulted in three responses in the religious arena: *radical religious pluralism*, *inclusivism*, and *exclusivism*. Evangelicals have traditionally taken the exclusivism position (see below). Today some evangelicals hold to inclusivism (see below). These three stances need special attention in African evangelical churches, colleges and seminaries. This is particularly relevant as evangelicalism is bound by Scripture, which forbids syncretism. Because of a growing



pluralistic movement in Africa, and since this study is concerned with effective discipling of evangelical converts in Africa, this matter of religious pluralism is now taken up.

#### **4.2 Radical religious pluralism, inclusivism and exclusivism**

*Radical religious pluralism* ‘holds that no religion can advance any legitimate claim to superiority over any other religion’ (Carson 1996:26). ‘All major religions are equally valid. No religion has the right to pronounce itself right or true, and the others false, or even (in the majority view) relatively inferior’ (:19). Radical religious pluralism ‘fights vehemently against any religious “monopoly” on truth’ (Wax 2007 [Online]) and sees that ‘at least some truths and true values exist in other religions’ (Religious Pluralism, [online]); all religions are equally close to the truth. Vlach ([Online]) defines radical religious pluralism as ‘All major world religions lead to God and salvation.’ Salvation of people is ‘by their own religions, independent of Christ and Christianity’ (Gillis 1993:19).

Vlach ([Online]) defines *inclusivism* as ‘One religion is best but salvation is possible in other religions.’ According to Carson (1996:26-27) inclusivism affirms ‘the truth of fundamental claims [of Christianity], nevertheless insists that God has revealed himself, even in saving ways, in other religions. ... [but] that God’s definitive act of self-disclosure is in Jesus Christ, and that he is in some way central to God’s plan of salvation for the human race, but that salvation is available in other religions’ (:26-27). This means that ‘People of other faiths can be saved by Jesus even if they do not explicitly believe in Him’ (Vlach [Online]). Hamilton (2007:90) notes Terrence Tiessen’s two kinds of inclusivism: *accessibilism* and *religious instrumentalism*. The former states that there is biblical reason for being hopeful that God may save members of other religions who don’t hear the Gospel, and the latter means God has raised up other religions as his instruments of salvation. Stackhouse (2007 [Online]) states that if the Gospel must be heard and believed for salvation, there are three positions to inclusivism: ‘Most widespread of these versions is that of evangelism before death ... A second version ... [people] will have it declared to them directly by the Holy Spirit at death. ... A third version ... affirms that after death each person receives the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel that was not available in life.’

Vlach ([Online]) defines *exclusivism* as ‘Salvation is found in only one religion.’ It includes the inclusiveness of Christ’s love but the exclusivity of his truth (Zacharias 2000:46).

Exclusivism 'teaches that the central claims of biblically faithful Christianity are true. Correspondingly, where the teachings of other religions conflict with these claims, they must necessarily be false. ... Normally it is also held that salvation cannot be attained through the structures or claims of other religions. It does not hold that any other religion is wrong in every respect' (Carson 1996:27; also Vlach [Online]). 'Until the modern period, this was virtually the unanimous position of Christians' (Carson 1996:27).

#### **4.2.1 Presentation and critique of radical religious pluralism**

It needs to be emphasized that 'Christians have traditionally argued that radical religious pluralism is an invalid or self-contradictory concept' (Religious pluralism [online]). People arrive at radical religious pluralism for a variety of reasons. From this point on the writer will be talking about radical pluralism (philosophical and religious) and so will use the term 'pluralism' with this meaning.

##### **4.2.1.1 All religions are ultimately headed in the same direction and have a common core**

Proponents of religious pluralism derive inspiration for their view from believing that world religions are headed in the same direction, namely to the one God, and their various salvations ultimately refer to the same salvation. Mahatma Gandhi (cited in Green 2002:14) said, 'The soul of religion is one, but it is encased in a multitude of forms.' Vlach ([Online]) gives another reason for the pluralist's position: 'For pluralists, there may be differences in rituals and beliefs among these groups, but on the most important issues, there is great similarity', e.g. love of God, love of neighbour, Golden Rule, and pious people. 'It seems undeniable that all religions have at their core the belief in invisible beings, immeasurably more powerful than humankind, who can be appealed to for assistance and support in general' (Hammond-Tooke 1998:5) (it seems this is not true, however, for pantheistic religions). '...undisputed truths about God, man, and sin lie embedded to varying degrees in the non-Christian religions' (Demarest cited in Carson 1996:294). 'The traditions of all peoples contain elements of truth imbedded in their cultures, myths and religious practices' (Dulles 2008 [Online]). Christianity recognizes that the Bible teaches that God reveals himself through his creation. Therefore it should be expected that there would be a common core to all religions. Pluralism encourages the 'attitude which rejects focus on immaterial differences, and instead gives respect to those beliefs held in common' (Religious pluralism [online]). It is in the area

of ethics (see below) where there is substantial agreement between the many religions. This is because natural revelation includes the inbuilt knowledge in every person of God's moral law (Rom 2:14-15). For some this common area in morality would make all religions essentially the same. It is thought by pluralists that their posture on the religions in the world should lead to 'harmonious co-existence between adherents of different religions' (Religious Pluralism [online]). Clearly if the religions are essentially the same or have much in common in key areas, it would seem ridiculous to divide over religion. This approach to diversity in religion is fueled by the fact that the world today is witnessing conflict, in some regions violent conflict, between adherents of different religions or sects within one religion. Where does the evangelical stand in regard to these positions? The problem for him/her is that the salvations of the different religions are different, and often 'immaterial differences' are substantial and the 'common' beliefs are mostly not common. It is 'difficult to think of a single noetic plank in one religion that is universally recognized by all other religions to be the truth' (Carson 1996:354).

Mayson (2006) argues for pluralism on the basis that all people in all faiths and of no faith share the same vision for humankind, namely 'experiencing the fullness of physical, spiritual and communal life' (:16). For him the Vital Force/Spiritual Power (see Chapter 3) in humanity is capable of working in every religious and secular community towards this same end (:3,8). However, he does not see this happening at present in the world (:17-18). Nevertheless, he is adamant that 'grasping the marvel of humanness' (:5) together with a prophetic vision for a world united in its diversity and in harmony with the drive of inner Vital Force, will achieve such a future (:7-10). He sees theology only as 'a progressive discovery of the Vital Force within [all] humanity' (:4). This secular spirituality is also recommended by Agnivesh (2006:207): 'There is ... an urgent need [for inter-religious dialogue] to evolve the spirituality for the global scenario.' Secular spirituality is claimed to stem from peoples' 'dedication and innate goodness' (Kourie 2006:88). Evangelicals believe that Vital Force (basic humanity/spirit in Mayson's understanding) or secular spirituality, without the new birth and indwelling Holy Spirit, is too weak to get the result Mayson admirably, desperately and passionately desires. This does not mean the attempt is to be despised and that it is not marked by good intentions. Evangelicals believe, though, that because every part of humanity is fallen, a vision of a united and holistically mature humanity through the power of a common inner, inborn life-force will not be achieved. Mayson and other pluralists, according to evangelicals, are naive in thinking that the world can even agree

on a common vision and spirituality for the human race, let alone achieve it. Below it will be demonstrated that the divergent beliefs and practices of the different religions militate against Mayson's dream. However, the more serious matter for evangelicals is that secular spirituality does not adequately take into account the God factor or the sin factor and has no atonement for sin. Kourie and Kretzschmar (2000:5) note that 'As God-breathed creatures, we human beings cannot truly live if we are separated from the Spirit of God.' Evangelicals therefore believe that true spirituality must be 'a call to rediscover our humanity in the presence of God and the Christian community' and live according to the principles and directives of the kingdom of God (:5).

#### 4.2.1.2 No religion can claim absolute truth

Another argument for the pluralists' position is that no single religion can claim absolute authority to teach absolute truth because all humans are finite and fallible: 'This means no religious text written by Man can absolutely describe God, God's will, or God's counsel, since it is God apart from Man who reveals the divine thoughts, intentions and volition perfectly' (Religious pluralism [online]). Even when God initiates direct communication/revelation with humans, the pluralist Hick believes the resulting knowledge of God will not be accurate: the 'human conceptual categories obscure "noumenal" realities' (cited in Peters 2005 [Online]). The pluralist's view of the ontological gap between God and humans is similar to the view held of God and humans in Africa (see Chapters 3 and 4).

The fallible issue according to pluralists is further affected by the cultural and historical context (baggage) of every person which affects the recording of revelation and its interpretation (Religious Pluralism [online]). In postmodernism, the result of not being able to 'talk about the objective truth of the matter' is to view interpretations as 'merely personal or at best culturally conditioned options' (Carson 1995:20). In the light of the above treatment of postmodernism, it can be seen that pluralism is bound up with it: 'Philosophical pluralism is the approach to cultural diversity that is supported by – and supports – postmodernity' (Carson 1995:22). This all means that 'No interpretation can be dismissed, and no interpretation can be allowed the status of objective truth' (:20).

Evangelicals, as shown above, believe God has revealed truths accurately that can be accurately grasped, though this understanding will hardly fully reflect God's understanding of

these truths. If the evangelical church in Africa flirts with pluralism it will become less certain of the finality of biblical truth and will be further opened to syncretism.

#### 4.2.1.3 All religions claim some kind of special revelation

Evangelicals admit that every person in the world is daily confronted with natural revelation. But apart from such revelation, religions, like Christianity, claim additional special (divine) revelation. It is believed in Africa that special revelation came to the first African ancestors (see Chapter 3) resulting in African traditional religions. The special revelation in religions is either intelligible, as in Islam, Christianity and ATR, or indescribable. All special revelation in Hick's understanding of divine revelation is fallible. Hick's view on special revelation, as noted above, is that God can be encountered, but this experience cannot be recorded in a way that accurately reflects it – it can only be imperfectly interpreted.

Hick has no confidence in a revelatory divine encounter yielding infallible information, and yet claims 'that each tradition's deity is an authentic face of the Real' (Johnson [Online]). It is difficult to imagine how Hick can talk of authentic encounter with the Divine if it cannot be meaningfully described and can only be captured in mythical terms as Hick states. Hick's approach to revelation would seem to imply that combining every 'authentic face of the Real' would give a much clearer picture of God and his will for humankind. But compiling such a composite picture would more likely give a garbled portrait and caricature of the Divine as the imperfect recordings of every encounter in the world and throughout history would be piled together. Another problem for pluralists is that there is no sure way of discerning the authentic from the inauthentic in divine encounters. Pinnock (cited in Tupamahu 2007 [Online]) concludes the following about pluralism's god: 'The "God" of religious pluralism tends to be completely unknowable like Kant's noumenon, something beyond good and evil, beyond personhood, undefinable and an inconceivable mystery.'

Christianity suffers badly when Hick's epistemological framework is applied. Firstly, 'Christians will come to understand their truth-claims regarding Jesus as reflective *not of propositions* but rather of an *interpretation* [by the Apostles] of the events surrounding Jesus' life as having religious significance' (Smid 1999 [Online], emphasis added). The apostles, therefore, were deceived to claim their knowledge of Christ was absolute and universally relevant. Secondly, Hick's approach 'develops an account of Christianity that is primarily oriented to the experiential encounter with the transcendent God Godself, rendering the

necessity of Jesus Christ somewhat questionable' (Smid 1999 [Online]). Hick fails to appreciate that the Bible teaches that through the incarnation Christ gave a real, visible, recordable and testable revelation of God that included propositional truth; and that the apostles did not undergo abstruse, mythical divine encounters. Evangelicals are fully aware of God's unapproachable, transcendent and indescribable glory and majesty. The revelation they talk about, however, is mediated revelation, i.e. revelation mediated through a dream, a vision, an angel, an audible and intelligible voice, God's Son, all making propositional truth possible. The Apostle Paul's special revelations referred to in 2 Corinthians 12 appear at first to be closer to the kind of revelation of the divine Hick talks about since it is described as 'inexpressible' (v4). However, Paul goes on to state that they constituted 'things that man is not permitted to tell' (v4), suggesting that it could be put into words. Carson (1984:146) takes the restriction on the communication of the revelations to others as due to their uniqueness: 'No one around Paul had enjoyed similar revelations, so there was no bridge of common experience on this topic. The visions remained fundamentally "inexpressible." ' 'They were entirely beyond the normal spiritual experience of most believers' (:147). Further, he (:147) states that the visions were given to Paul 'to fortify him for his service and sufferings' – 'staggering sufferings, formidable opposition, and quite incredible challenges.' In other words they were not for the church.

Though evangelicals accept general revelation as a common experience of adherents of all religions, they believe the human mind, influenced by the sinful nature, the kingdom of Satan and a depraved world, either unintentionally or deliberately muddies and manipulates general revelation. Christianity, therefore, implies that other religions are 'distorted human attempts to grasp reality' (Peskett and Ramachandra 2003:28). Special revelation is therefore necessary to correct false interpretations of general revelation and to supplement general revelation as it is limited to proving that God exists, is moral, and to be thanked. This is logical and plausible in the light of the sheer irreconcilable differences between the religions. For the evangelical the Bible is this special and final revelation and therefore the yardstick for assessing other religions.

The pluralist puts claimed divine revelation in all religions on the same level and thereby undermines the Bible as final revelation and Christianity as a universal faith. Pluralism drastically weakens or cancels the need and motivation to spread the Gospel throughout the world. Hick's philosophical theory about divine revelation cannot be proved, as he admits.

His approach was developed more for relevance in a pluralistic age. For evangelicals, Christianity as portrayed in the Bible is founded on a more solid foundation than Hick's epistemological and religious theory.

#### 4.2.1.4 Pluralism permits, even encourages, syncretism

Gillis (1993:16) advocates what he calls a new paradigm for theology: Christian theology should be constructed from the data of all religions – from ‘the encounter of Christianity with the world religions.’ He arrives at this position because he ‘acknowledges that these traditions [other major religious traditions] have a source of revelation and thus are genuinely in touch with the divine’ and that therefore each tradition is sufficient for salvation – ‘other traditions have salvific figures and pathways to salvation’ (:89). Further, since Christianity and all other religions are based on the fact that ‘truths are universally apprehended’, Christianity should ‘incorporate these other consciously apprehended truths to itself’ (:75). Clearly Gillis advocates syncretism, though he would not agree with this accusation as for him all revelations/teachings of the world religions are equally valid and therefore will not be contradictory. He (:21) agrees with the quote, ‘True universality cannot be understood as the extension of one particularity at the cost of others’, and believes in the ‘intrinsic value of other religious traditions’ (:22). He (:21) rejects Christianity's exclusivism (see below) because he sees it as ‘a form of Christian imperialism, because it imposes Christ as saviour on all persons regardless of their own beliefs about salvation or their own religious traditions.’ He (:20) believes exclusivism did not come from Jesus, but was later added by the developing Christian community in order to ‘establish itself and to attract converts.’ The faith claims in Christianity are only for those ‘who profess Christ as saviour’ (:75). He (:74) wants to ‘reinterpret and relativize elements of the [Christian] tradition, even central ones, without abandoning all of its theological categories.’ In Christianity Christ remains central, ‘but Christianity's claims about Christ [like being the only way and his double nature] are not automatically addressed to all persons regardless of their beliefs and traditions’ (:75).

In response to Gillis a number of points can be made. Firstly, since the church has for nearly two thousand years taught exclusivism, it is most unlikely that Gillis' pluralism is right. Secondly, he has no proof for claiming that the exclusivistic position with its stress on world evangelism was not in the earliest Christianity and that elements in Christianity are relative. Thirdly, he does not seem to allow for the influence of Satan as a deceiver and source of lies

in any religion (see Chapter 4). Fourthly, he clearly does not distinguish between natural revelation and special revelation and reckon with the influence of the sinful nature on interpreting the former. Once this distinction in revelation is removed, Gillis' position is more persuasive. Fifthly, he is more governed by the attractiveness and appeal of religious pluralism than the teachings of the Bible. Lastly, it looks like he has failed to appreciate the irreconcilable differences between Christianity and the other world religions.

For evangelicals religious pluralism is not an option as Christianity is based on special and final revelation. It also fails to appreciate that other religions are forbidden in the Bible. The Israelites were 'repeatedly told not only that Yahweh and Yahweh alone is *their* God, but that he is the *only* God, and that the gods of the nations are impotent idols (see especially Isaiah 40-45 ...)' (Carson 1996:251). In the first century world of the Roman Empire the 'enormous potpourri [of religions] was pluralistic – that is, it was not a conglomeration of mutually exclusive religious groups, each damning all the others. ... the religious world that nascent Christianity confronted was profoundly pluralistic' (:271). 'The ancient Greeks were polytheists; pluralism in that historical era meant accepting the existence of and validity of other faiths, and the gods of other faiths. The Romans easily accomplished this task by subsuming the entire set of gods from other faiths into their own religion' (Religious pluralism [Online]). The New Testament shows that though the Christians were in a world steeped in religious pluralism and syncretism, they declared Christianity as exclusivist. 'Thus, against the claims of other intermediaries, Colossians insists not only on the supremacy of Christ but also on the exclusiveness of his sufficiency. While others recognize many "lords," many (pagan) baptisms, a wide variety of "hope" (i.e. diverse visions of the *summum bonum*), Christians recognize one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one hope, and one God (Eph 4:4-6)' (Carson 1996:272).

With the emphasis on the African Renaissance (see Chapters 3, 5 and 6) in a pluralistic climate, especially in South Africa, syncretism is likely to be an increasing challenge to the evangelical church. The pastors need special equipment to resist this pressure and ensure their converts do likewise.

#### 4.2.1.5 Final critique of religious pluralism



Religious pluralism fails ‘to come to grips with the towering figure of Jesus’ (Netland cited in Carson 1996:315). The exclusiveness of Christianity stems ultimately from the person and work of its founder, Jesus Christ. The superiority of Jesus over all other great religious leaders in his influence, his teaching, and his character has been demonstrated (Green 2002:27-34; Zacharias 2000:91; see Chapter 4). There is no other religious teaching that comes close to the profound teaching of Jesus: ‘He speaks as no other does’ (Zacharias 2000:187). Green (2002:35-73) discusses four additional things that make Jesus stand out above other influential religious leaders: ‘No other great teacher even claimed to bring God to us’; ‘No other great teacher dealt radically with human wickedness’; ‘No other great teacher broke the final barrier – death’; ‘No other great teacher offers to live within his followers.’ ‘The fulfilment of that prediction [of his resurrection] reveals the uniqueness of Jesus above all contenders’ (Zacharias 2000:67). Lecky (cited in Zacharias 2000:4) states that Jesus’ character was the highest pattern of virtue and the strongest incentive in practice, and that his life ‘has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all exhortations of moralists.’ Further, through Christ there is hope for the world unlike ‘in any of the religious systems or philosophies of humankind. No faith holds out a promise of salvation for the world the way the cross and resurrection of Jesus do’ (Peskett and Ramachandra 2003:31).

Unlike other world religions, Christianity is rooted in history, not myth or speculation or indescribable encounters with the divine. The prophecies and their fulfilment, the person and work of Christ and his resurrection ‘do have their points of verification in history. ... the Christian’s faith is not a leap into the dark’ (Zacharias 2000:63, 64). The solid historical basis of Christianity, its leader’s impeccable life, and the testimony of millions of transformed lives throughout church history strengthen Christianity’s plausibility above that of other religions. Evangelicals thus believe they have sufficient reasons for accepting the Bible’s claim of being objective truth and therefore believe they are justified in using it as truth-criterion in assessing other religious beliefs. What makes this position even more reasonable is the coherence of the explanation the Bible provides of the origin of religious diversity.

Since evangelicals take the Christian revelation as the final measuring rod for all revelation claimed in other religions, they must reject religious pluralism and its implied syncretism. If the Bible is final truth, but of course not exhaustive truth, as it professes to be, then for evangelicals any revelation contrary to the Bible cannot be truth – it is either speculation,

misinterpretation of experience, mental thoughts or images when meditating, or meditations inspired by Satan or demons, all options allowed for in the Bible (see Chapters 3 and 4).

Pluralism believes that views based on sincerity should be respected: 'It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere' (Green 2002:9). It does not take long to see the fallacy of this reasoning. 'Hitler was sincere but terribly wrong' (:9). 'I may sincerely believe that all aeroplanes at London will take me to America, but I would be wrong' (:10). '... nobody in their right mind imagines that if only they believe hard enough that two and two equals five, that would make it so' (:10). Clearly then, 'Sincerity is absolutely essential but, by itself, absolutely insufficient' (:12).

Another criticism of religious pluralism is its naivety (i) in claiming all religions worship the same God, and (ii) in how much commonality there is between the different religions. Firstly, there is the problem of who is going to decide what constitutes the soul/core and what constitutes the non-essentials of religions (Green 2002:17). Secondly, worshippers within different faiths deny that all religions are essentially the same. For instance, the evangelical understanding of the Gospel (its creed and doctrines) are judged by African Theology 'as unacceptable to its African insights' (Setiloane 2000:51). Zacharias (2000:36) speaks of 'the confusion of religions with no single message'. Green (2002:19-25) shows how clearly all religions do not lead to the same God. Though almost all religions have a small common core (a superior being, basic morality, and an interest beyond selfish concerns), they hold extraordinarily divergent and opposing views of what God is like, of humanity, of the goal of life, of how God reveals himself, of how to be saved from sin, and of the life to come (:15-16,75,76). The religions are not 'different ways to understanding [and worshipping] the same God' (Green 2002:13). 'Anyone who claims that all religions are the same betrays not only an ignorance of all religions but also a caricatured view of even the best-known ones. Every religion at its core is exclusive' (Zacharias 2000:7). People who say all religions are much the same 'have never thought deeply about it' (Green 2002:16). Nobody 'with his head screwed on can claim that it [Christianity] is just the same as other religions!' (:18). Peskett and Ramachandra (2003:63) state that 'the attempt to relate them all [different religions] systematically within an imagined "world theology"... would be recognized by the believers of no tradition.' 'It is the academics sitting in their studies who write books saying that all religions are the same: the practitioners on the ground think differently' (Green 2002:15). Green (:17) asks a perceptive question: 'What if one religion really does give a fuller

expression of that essence [common core] than another?’ What if religions other than Christianity are essentially wrong? For evangelicals to gamble on the possibility that all religions lead to heaven and get it wrong would be disastrous.

Religious pluralists argue that evangelicals should be tolerant of all religious views, the only acceptable position. ‘Few opinions are less liberal and tolerant than the form of liberalism fiercely intolerant of everything but itself’ (Carson 1984:111). Carson (:112) also aptly notes that ‘Endless toleration may reflect an indifference to truth; ... to oppose nothing suggests we are blind, foolish or careless.’ He (:112) quotes Hodge to show that the evangelical Christian has to take seriously the deceptive nature of Satan: ‘Satan does not come to us as Satan; neither does sin present itself to us as sin, but in the guise of virtue; and the teachers of error set themselves forth as the special advocates of truth.’ Carson (:113) reminds his readers of the point that Satan is the believer’s ‘archenemy and archdeceiver. Unless we understand this, we will be pathetically gullible, sucked into various sins and blown this way and that in our doctrine.’

There is a sense in which evangelicals can support religious pluralism, namely in respecting adherents of other faiths because they have been created in God’s image, possess some truth through natural revelation, and because they often do amazing good works, can be kind, generous, loyal, friendly, harmonious and honest. Evangelicals can learn from their virtues and zeal for good works and their faiths. Westerners ministering in Africa need to be humble and respectful of the Africans whom they evangelize and disciple, and realize that African ethics and interpretation of natural revelation reflects much of the truths found in biblical (special) revelation (see Chapter 4).

More needs to be said about the negative fallout from the pluralist’s position. Pluralism in general and religious pluralism in particular can undermine a commitment to cultural and religious values and standards. Chapter 5 looks at the important and necessary place of culture in society, especially in producing a healthy self-identity. Pluralism also discourages vigorous debate marked by critical reflection. It has the power to generate mental apathy and decrease the search for deeper truth, especially in the religious realm. By indirectly challenging the importance of religious and cultural distinctives, it is weakening the inner fabric that is needed to hold societies together in pride, service, productivity and unity. The outcome of the ‘flight from particularity can only be to nothing in particular’ (D’Costa cited in Preskett and

Ramachandra 2003:66). Pluralism tends to take the focus away from one's ethnic group and religious group and their strengthening and put it on a vaguely defined world family and anaemic religiosity and cultural dilution; and this stance easily degenerates into alienation, loneliness, apathy and preoccupation with self. In other words pluralism, ethnic and religious, tends to weaken family and community bonds and loyalty to both, which goes totally against ATRs' value of a unified, strong group. This in turn tends to produce greed, selfishness, materialism, lack of responsibility and accountability, crime and disintegration. Ideals and worthwhile, heroic and developmental goals tend to dissolve in a strongly pluralistic society, leaving a future that is bland, uninspiring and without challenge. Pluralism thus undercuts ethics, which can be vividly observed in the South African situation where there has been a loose and watered down amalgam of ATRs and other cultures and religions in the townships and cities (see Chapter 5).

Since pluralism tends to hamper rather than help build strong, developing and cohesive communities with values to live and die for, it leads to societies leaving poorer heritages behind. Through pluralism's influence, drive, sacrifice, vision and achievement are becoming less conspicuous. When the inner, communal and religious worlds contract humans become less and less.

Pluralism, nurtured in the soil of modernism and especially postmodernism, has strengthened the selfism movement and helped fan the human rights and freedom movements, resulting in more conflict and less commitment to others and to duties and to maintaining good order and cohesion in society. 'The rights explosion of the past three decades has taken us on a rapid descent to a culture without civility, decency, or even that degree of discipline to maintain an advanced industrial civilization. Our cities are cesspools, our urban schools terrorist training camps, our legislatures brothels where rights are sold to the highest electoral bidder' (Don Feder cited in Carson 1996:53). We are witnessing the emergence of a society that 'believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die' (Dorothy Sayers cited in Carson 1996:53). Moeller van den Bruck (cited in Lauryssens 1999:122), the author of *The Third Reich*, describes Weimer Germany in similar terms and ascribes this state to a loss of racial-cultural-religious identity: 'Liberalism has undermined cultures, destroyed religions and the Fatherland. It is decomposition, the self-surrender of mankind [sic].' Lauryssens shows how van den Bruck

profoundly influenced Adolph Hitler, who was the activist who implemented van den Bruck's ideas. What is of interest to the dissertation is the incredible energy, strength and devotion that a clear and specific racial-cultural-religious identity can unleash. Such creative, passionate, united and goal-focused energy and drive properly directed cannot be matched in a neutral pluralistic world. Only such costly energy can impart high levels of order, discipline, efficiency, sacrifice, meaning and purpose and result in deeply satisfying achievements (except if the energy is violently dissipated at the expense of others as happened in World War II, and is happening in sectors of Islam). The Afrikaners also demonstrated what a people can achieve where there was a strong cultural-ethnic-religious identity: 'The creation of their nation and language was an extraordinary social achievement' (L'Ange 2005:501). Ntshangase (2006) tells of a Zulu ceremony where a new regiment was appointed. It involved the men proving their strength by killing 'a black bull with bare hands.' Here is another example of the power and achievement that a strong cultural base marked by pride can release. It would seem that to destroy a nation one merely needs to destroy its culture and religion (see Chapters 5 and 6 for how colonial imperialism and the migratory labour system, especially the male hostels, undermined African culture and identity and the effects) .

Clearly evangelicals in Africa need to be warned of being influenced or intimidated by the political promotion of pluralism. For Christians to be true to the Bible's story-line, pluralism is not a choice. It is also not an option as it is spiritually and socially dangerous. Again the importance of thorough discipleship of evangelical converts in Africa emerges.

#### **4.2.2 Presentation and critique of inclusivism**

Inclusivism is inspired by the feeling that it is not fair that people who have not heard the Gospel be lost/doomed, especially as they constitute the majority of the human race (Wax 2007 [Online]). Inclusivism is considered in the dissertation because the writer sees it as largely the product of the popularity of pluralism. Further, it is tackled because the writer considers it a threat to world evangelism, the mandate of the church, and to separation from worldliness.

##### **4.2.2.1 Are any evangelicals inclusivists?**

‘While it is undoubtedly true that the great majority of evangelical Christians since the Reformation has supported Exclusivism, there are actually many examples of writers who are closer to Inclusivism’ (Brace 2002 [Online]). Brace (2002 [Online]) states that Justin Martyr was inclusivist in approach, and that this is significant because through Polycarp he was linked to the apostle John. He also mentions Clement of Alexandria as inclusivist in overall theology. Wax (2007 [Online]) notes that ‘several prominent evangelical scholars have begun espousing a “middle way” [inclusivism] between exclusivists’ claims of traditional Christianity and the relativistic doctrines of today’s pluralism.’ Brace (2002 [Online]) includes the following in his list of those evangelicals who in more recent times have embraced inclusivism: Augustus Strong, C.S. Lewis, Bernard Ramm, Charles Kraft, Dale Moody, Neil Punt, John Sanders and John R.W. Stott. So Carson (1996:313) can talk about ‘increasingly popular inclusivism’. Wax (2007 [Online]) states that ‘In evangelicalism, no monolithic movement of “inclusivists” exists.’

#### 4.2.2.2 The two axioms of inclusivism

Inclusivism ‘rests upon two axioms: *particularity* and *universality*’ (Wax 2007 [Online]). The particular axiom refers to the finality of Jesus Christ: salvation ‘is found only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ’ (Wax 2007 [Online]; also Pinnock cited in Tupamahu 2007 [Online]). The universal axiom is that this salvation must be possible throughout the world. Pinnock deduces the universal axiom from biblical texts that speak strongly of God’s love for all humans, his boundless mercy and desire that everyone be saved, which he feels must mean all must have access to salvation. This suggests that salvation is possible through general revelation and other religions. (Pinnock cited in Tupamahu 2007 [Online].) As Wax (2007 [Online]) puts it, the universal axiom leads to entertaining the possibility that the other religions might play some role, a preparatory role, in salvation. ‘Inclusivism believes that God can use both general and special revelation in salvific ways’, and in the former case because ‘Faith in God is what saves, not possessing certain minimum information’ (Pinnock cited in 2007 [Online]).

In all fairness to inclusivists, their link of the particularity and universality of salvation must not be conveniently forgotten. As Pinnock states it, ‘This [finality of Christ] means that universality (salvation for the world) is reached by way of particularity (salvation through Christ) in Christianity’. This means God will ultimately save unevangelized people on the basis of the person and work of Christ. For Pinnock there is the universal work of the Spirit

alongside the particular work of Jesus – they do not contradict each another and in some way they are co-workers to bring salvation to the world (cited in Tupamahu 2007 [Online].)

So according to inclusivists, natural revelation and the various religions can lead to salvation, if the response is belief in the existence of God and a genuine seeking of him and a desire to please him. It is thus hard to know why Christianity was and is to be spread to all people throughout the world (see below). Further, the Apostle Paul sees all non-Christians as blinded by Satan, spiritually dead in sin, and enemies of God. This would imply for Christians of Reformed (Calvinistic) persuasion that the unevangelized's seeking of God cannot be truly sincere – marked by genuine, right motives and intentions – and therefore would not lead to salvation, even if the inclusivist's position is accepted. This argument would fall away if the unevangelized person sought God through the Holy Spirit's help (see below).

#### 4.2.2.3 Arguments of the inclusivists

##### 4.2.2.3.1 Pagan saints in the Bible were saved

Inclusivists see faith in God resulting from natural revelation, a sincere seeking of God and a striving to do his will as it is (imperfectly) conceived in the conscience as defining a pagan saint (Dulles 2008 [Online]). Such a person they believe will be saved through the atoning death of Christ. 'Inclusivists point to Old Testament saints as examples of people who did not know of Jesus, but did know of God and responded to him with saving faith (Hebrews 11)' (Stackhouse 2007 [Online]). Exclusivists, however, would say that the Old Testament saints had really trusted Christ through the Old Testament types and shadows pointing to him. Since this cannot be said of other religions, people in other religions cannot be viewed as in the same position as Old Testament saints (also Carson 1996:298). Pinnock mentions a number of pagan saints – Enoch, Lot, Ruth, Job, Jethro, Naaman and Cornelius – who lived outside the Old Covenant or New Covenant, and in whom God was at work. He, therefore, views all world religions as 'vehicles' of salvation for holy pagans who have faith toward God and desire to seek him (cited in Tupamahu 2007 [Online]). However, again it seems that in all these cases it was contact with the faith of Israel or Christianity that led to salvation.

##### 4.2.2.3.2 There is an offer of salvation after death

Pinnock sees God's graciousness to sinners after death based on 1 Peter 3:19-20: 'God discerns who among the heathen truly searches for the good and offers them salvation after

death' (cited in Tupamahu 2007 [Online]). Evangelicals do not take this passage as allowing for salvation after death. This is because evangelicals do not believe it 'can be supported from Scripture' (Wheaton 1994:1380). Wheaton (:1380) notes that many commentators interpret the passage to refer to Christ's declaration of his victory over death and the Devil, not as evangelization of the dead.

#### 4.2.2.3.3 Inclusivism is claimed not to weaken commitment to world mission

Pinnock, an annihilation inclusivist, claims his view does not dismiss the urgency of world mission. However, he feels hell-fire should not be the motivation for universal evangelism. It should be the news of a unique event in which God is reconciling the world to himself in Jesus Christ and which was the beginning of the age of salvation. (cited in Tupamahu 2007 [Online].) But if salvation can be without hearing about Christ, it is difficult to see why there would be any urgency for world mission. If other religions can save, though through Christ, those who are seeking God and truth and attempting to live a good and moral life according to their understanding and religion, then these people do not actually need to hear the Gospel. The question must now be asked: Would such people accept the Gospel if they heard it? And if they did not accept the Gospel on hearing it, would their seeking God and life that honours him still save them? It seems inclusivism could find it hard trying to explain why the first Christians were told to evangelize the world. Inclusivists could argue that those heathens seeking God and righteousness and therefore saved would gain much by accepting the Gospel: they would have received the truth and blessedness for which they yearned, would understand that salvation is through Christ, would belong to the universal church, enjoy Christian fellowship in the church, be nourished by God's word and sacraments, and experience a greater level of fellowship with God and greater spirituality and joy (Dulles 2008 [Online]). It could also be argued that since there are so many unevangelized not seeking God and his will there is an urgent need to evangelize the unevangelized.

#### 4.2.2.3.4 The magnitude and triumph of God's love

Brace (2002 [Online]) believes that 'those finally saved will only be saved through Him [Christ]'; but that at the end of time 'the majority of the human race will finally be saved since the Scriptures appear to speak of a final complete triumph of Christ; therefore God will extend His grace and mercy to many who have a very imperfect knowledge of Him.' He (2002 [Online]) lists the following verses (not an exhaustive list he says) that show that 'there



must come a time or there must be some way in which the saving work of Jesus Christ is going to have a broader application': 'Matt 25: 31-46, Luke 15: 2-32, Luke 19:10, John 1: 9, 29, John 3: 16-17, John 4: 42, John 6: 33, 51, John 12: 31-32, Acts 10: 1-35, Acts 14: 16-17, Acts 17: 23-28, Roms 2: 6-16, Roms 5: 6,15-20, Roms 11: 12, 15, 1 Cor 15:24-28, 2 Cor 5: 14-15, 19, Eph 1:10, Phil 2:10-11, Col 1:20, 1 Tim 2: 4,6, 1 Tim 4: 10, Titus 2: 11, Hebs 2: 9, James 1: 27, 2 Peter 3: 9, 1 John 2: 2, 1 John 4: 14, Rev 20: 12, Rev 21: 24, Rev 22: 2'.

It is not clear why a great harvesting at the end of time could not come through the amazing spread of the Gospel throughout the world in previously unseen and unheard of ways, leading the majority to faith in Christ. Historical revivals give examples of massive and speedy numerical growth of the church in short periods of time. Philippians 2:10-11 seems to teach that the bowing of every knee to Christ at the end of the age does not mean in saving faith; it is rather a reluctant, unwilling and forced acknowledgement of who Christ really is, something like Satan and his demons' acknowledgement of Christ's kingship, which is hardly saving.

Many of the above verses do indeed talk about God's passion for saving the lost. However, these verses need to be pondered alongside those that show that there will be people in hell. So God's preference for saving sinners due to his love, grace and mercy must be harmonized with his justice and wrath against sinners. There is mystery here in the being/nature of God. Further, these verses must also be harmonized with those teaching salvation through faith in Christ alone. Brace (2002 [Online]) sees certain verses as indicating far greater numbers of people in heaven than in hell: 'Finally, the *'great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues'* is NOT a description of those in Hell, but of those finally saved! (Rev 7:9, 19:1,6)'. Exclusivists would agree that there will be an unbelievably great number in heaven. But this does not necessarily mean there will be more in heaven by far than in hell or very few in hell. The reference to 'an uncountable' number in heaven could be a form of hyperbole to stress the bigness of the number of the saved without implying all or the majority of humans will be saved.

Though inclusivists strongly believe that false religion cannot save anyone, they 'point out the numerous biblical examples which depict God's concern for the suffering, the deprived, the deceived, yes, and the lost too. The biblical approach is to seek out and recover that which was lost!' (Brace 2002 [Online]). But this compassion of God for these people does not

necessarily mean that if they have not heard of Christ they will be saved. It is a mystery, that we cannot fathom, that God without contradiction can love and the same time condemn to hell. However, because of God's compassion and wrath, exclusivists are motivated to mission.

Brace (2002 [Online]) deduces from the verse, 'In your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed,' that 'God is concerned with *ALL* of His human Creation. That 'seed,' of course, was Christ. And God had the blessing of 'all the families of the earth' in mind. ... *and it is clearly not a picture of Restrictivism.*' This verse may simply mean that witness to God's way of salvation is to be made universally, not just to Israel, and that people from every nation at some time in the future will hear the Gospel and be saved. Also this verse does not necessarily have to apply retrospectively, currently and prospectively to those without access to the Gospel, in type or fullness; this would undercut all the myriad verses that focus on eternal judgement and the need to repent and believe in this life for salvation. Inclusivists don't reckon with the possibility that unevangelized sinners, at least the majority, might not or will not want God's salvation if presented with it. The Reformed view on unconditional election and efficacious grace means that the saved had to first be made able and willing to accept Christ for salvation. Reformed evangelicals do not believe God is blameworthy for not working savingly in all who hear the Gospel. They would extend this reasoning to those who lived and died without ever having been evangelized. It just means the non-elect were not shown this special grace but left to face their rightful judgement for being rebels against God. Here again mystery prevails.

With reference to Mark 16:15-16, Brace (2002 [Online]) states, 'We see from such Scriptures that all who willfully reject Jesus Christ while in full possession of the details of the Gospel, are in *real danger of damnation!* But the situation of the unevangelised is not directly addressed but, as we have seen, we can surely count on God's mercy in many such cases.' Again this is speculation as the passage says no more than that if hearers of the Gospel reject Christ they will not be saved. This verse is not speaking to the issue of the unevangelized.

#### 4.2.2.3.5 Salvation can be received through good behaviour

Brace (2002 [Online]) interprets Romans 2:13-16 as follows: 'So we have here something of a picture of Gentiles (or, unbelievers) not necessarily finding themselves in a hopeless position

on the Day of Judgement, but being judged according to their behaviour as indeed Revelation 20:12 confirms.’ Inclusivists, according to Williams (2008:‘2’), ‘do not see salvation [of the unevangelized] on the basis of works’ and he lists Romans 2:6-11 as support. However, a closer look at this Romans passage shows that a desire for God and perfection and eternal life (‘seek glory, honor and immortality’) and persisting in good works (vv 6-7,10) are linked, indicating the unevangelized require both the former and the latter for salvation. The context (2:13; 3:9,20) shows that apart from believing the Gospel, salvation is only possible through perfectly keeping God’s law, which feat no person can attain. If, as is most likely, good works here (2:7,10) mean perfect works, the inclusivists’ hope for the salvation of the unevangelized appears unfounded. This surely weakens all the other arguments of the inclusivists.

#### 4.2.2.3.6 Final critique of inclusivism

Carson (1996:300-333) deals with a number of examples of how inclusivists deal with biblical texts/themes in order to arrive at their position. The following are some of his examples: The parable of the prodigal son is taken as a representative of those who have never heard the gospel (:301-302); John 14:6 is taken to mean ‘according to *our experience* and according to *our knowledge* Jesus Christ *is* the true manifestation of the reality ‘God’’ (:304); Acts 4:12 is interpreted as not excluding ‘eternal salvation from the vast majority of people who have ever lived on earth’ (:304-305); Romans 2:14-16 is taken to mean ‘devout pagans, who in the presence of sin, have been ashamed, and have cried out in anguish, and confessed to whatever representation of the Holy Spirit they acknowledge’, and that ‘God most certainly does save people in this way’ (:311); the Lord’s Prayer is interpreted to mean that ‘There is no suggestion of the need for a mediator between ourselves and God or for an atoning death to enable God to forgive’ (:320); Christology is viewed in an evolutionary model, so Christology will always be changing, which means in today’s pluralistic climate the church must develop new Christologies as it dialogues with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam (:325-326); from the many occurrences of ‘all’ in Colossians 1:15-20 it is deduced that Christ is found in all religions; this position is further developed by taking Christ as separate from Jesus, and Christ as the only mediator, who works differently in different religions (:328). Carson and most other evangelicals do not agree with these interpretations. Carson (1996:288) feels that more is deduced from the texts than is warranted by giving great importance to ‘hints’ rather than to the clear teaching on salvation; and that this interpretation of the texts ‘contradicts other parts of the primary evidence.’ Similarly Hamilton (2007:89-

112) comes to the conclusion that the evangelical Tiessen's inclusivism cannot be substantiated from Scripture because it 'is based on extra-biblical considerations, demands that unbiblical theological categories be introduced, denies what the Bible affirms ... and affirms what the Bible denies ...' 'The New Testament and the theology of the first millennium give little hope for the salvation of those who, since the time of Christ, have had no chance of hearing the gospel. If God has a serious salvific will for all, this lacuna needed to be filled, as it has been by theological speculation and [Roman Catholic] church teaching since the sixteenth century' (Dulles 2008 [Online]). Dulles believes it should be possible to reconcile the two perspectives – salvation by explicit faith in Christ and salvation by implicit faith. Exclusivists disagree.

The Book of Acts states that God 'accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right' (Acts 10:35). This appears to mean that throughout history unevangelized people were saved if they met these conditions. Cornelius is singled out as an example of such persons (God-fearing and righteous, though clearly not perfectly righteous). But chapters 10 and 11 in Acts show that salvation is by faith and repentance, even in the case of Cornelius (cf 10:43 11:17-18). Further, the reception of the Holy Spirit – the mark of a Christian – did not come before Cornelius had heard the Gospel and repented and believed. Peter, therefore, in Acts 10:35 most likely means even righteous, godly Gentiles could be saved, but through conversion (cf 10:34a). The evangelistic and church-planting accounts in Acts show that many Gentile God-fearers like Cornelius were saved, but through repentance and faith. In other words such people could not bypass the need for Christian conversion in order to be saved. It appears Cornelius was like a pious Jew before coming to Christ. Since such Jews needed to take the route of Christian conversion for salvation, the need would be the same for Cornelius and other godly and righteous Gentiles. The best explanation of Acts 10:35 is that if the Gospel was relevant to a righteous, God-fearing Gentile, all such Gentiles are accepted by God when they come to Christ. The rest of New Testament history shows that Peter would also write that God accepts unrighteous, godless Jews and Gentiles for salvation, but through Christian conversion. Inclusivists argue that Cornelius' position was different to the unevangelized righteous God-fearer who never hears the Gospel. But Cornelius was a righteous, godly man before being evangelized. This would seem to mean through embracing the Gospel he experienced a second salvation, something foreign to the New Testament. If it were possible for the unevangelized to be saved, it would seem that the New Testament would

have dealt clearly with this matter, especially as it would have been obvious that there would be many unevangelized in the world in spite of the call for world evangelism.

Wax (2007 [Online]) feels that ‘evangelical inclusivism represents a capitulation to the current culture by adopting Western individualistic notions of “fairness,” by emptying saving faith of its biblical content, and by sharing the culture’s high view of human goodness.’ Exclusivists see inclusivism as succumbing to the spirit of the age. Wax (2007 [Online]) also notes that inclusivism ‘is on-the-surface an attractive doctrine, but it leaves you empty because it weakens the missiological cause and adopts the world’s way of looking at “faith.” ’ Williams (2008:‘2’) states that ‘most inclusivists would feel that even though salvation is possible outside of the church, it is a rarity because often religions give a bias against Christ – in this case mission is still urgent.’ If an adherent of a non-Christian religion was biased against Christ because he felt his religion sufficient for salvation, according to inclusivism he should be saved.

The writer is of the opinion that inclusivists don’t seem to appreciate the severity of sin, namely that the sinner deserves God’s wrath. Many evangelicals, especially those of Reformed convictions, are amazed therefore that God even saves some. The huge number of people throughout the world who *have* heard the Gospel but remained in unbelief, would indicate a similar response if the unevangelized deceased had heard the Gospel. If election is taken as unconditional election, as in the Reformed tradition, it is concluded that those who reject the Gospel or never hear it have not been elected unto salvation. Those evangelicals who accept this understanding of divine election do not take the doctrine lightly. It is disturbing and painful and saddens them deeply that some people have not been chosen to be saved. They see this as mystery, probably somehow tied up with God’s holiness and human sinfulness (Rom 9:30-32), and the fact that eternal judgement of unredeemed sinners will magnify the grace of God to those eternally saved (cf Rom 9:22-23).

Exclusivists view passages like Romans 9:18,22-23, Acts 4:12 and Romans 10:11-13 (and there are hosts more) as meaning that faith in Christ and not any other religious faith is the only way of salvation. This for them is supported by the imperative of world-wide missions. It is hard to see why missions drove the early church if salvation was possible through other religions or piety and seeking God, especially when one notes the wide prevalence of religions in the first-century world.

Africa is seeking a resurgence of African traditional religions. There is a call to be proudly African and treasure the African heritage. Africa is seeking to heal and strengthen its African identity, and quite rightly so. Inclusivism in Africa would be the ideal way to justify a renewed adherence to traditional religions and encourage syncretism.

Since inclusivism is being more widely spread in evangelical circles, discipleship of converts in Africa will need to take this into account. The writer believes that inclusivism needs to be countered because it undermines the Great Commission and provides fake or unfounded hope for salvation through non-Christian faith.

#### **4.2.3 Exclusivism**

It cannot be denied that inclusivism appeals strongly to exclusivists. Further, embracing the exclusivistic position does not mean people of other faiths are disdained. Nor does it imply, as noted above, that evangelicals cannot learn from other religions, including atheism, especially from the morality and zeal of some of their adherents. Exclusivists should not be proud, but sincerely humble because their salvation is by grace alone. Further, they are to be motivated to live with respect and love for every human being (Ja 3:9-10), even their enemies (Mt 5:44; Rom 12:14,20), to be peace-loving (Rom 12:18), to be compassionate to those in need (Ja 2:16-20), and to witness to Christ in non-dictatorial and non-coercive ways (Col 4:5-6; 1 Pet 3:15-16).

For Brace (2002 [Online]), exclusivism must mean (if it is consistent) ‘*no salvation* for those who die in childhood, *no salvation* for the millions of unevangelised who lived and died without hearing the Gospel and *no salvation* for dearly loved relatives who lived and died without embracing Christianity even while they may have been loving, kind and gentle human beings. *No salvation* too for those who lived miserably short and sad lives of suffering and despair.’ Brace’s description makes exclusivism seem awfully callous and sadistic, and therefore surely not true. So does Agnivesh’s (2006:190) comment: ‘it [exclusivism] might appear that God is interested only in the salvation of one group and is happy to have the rest accommodated in the warm hospitality of hell.’ Evangelicals see such comments as misrepresenting God by failing to appreciate the seriousness of sin against a holy, just, loving God, and the wonder that God saves anybody, and the horror of hell. Though some

exclusivists believe babies who die and the mentally handicapped will be saved, some would plead agnostic here. This, however, is only a small fraction of the people Brace has in mind. Exclusivists believe that God's justice and love will be vindicated. They also accept the Scripture's recognition that all God's attributes and ways are above humans' comprehension and that a righteous God is not to be judged by sinful humans. In the matter of election, the Reformed evangelicals identify with the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:33-36: he ends up worshipping God rather than arguing with him about election. Exclusivists hold their position only because for them it is the most faithful to Scripture. Williams (2008: '2') believes most evangelical inclusivists feel 'strict exclusivism implies Gnosticism, salvation by knowledge.' Strict exclusivism is not spelt out by Williams. Clearly to believe the Gospel demands at least a minimal understanding of certain doctrines, but Exclusivists do not look to this understanding for salvation, but to the Christ described in it. Christian faith is thus faith in a person.

The evangelical understanding of the Gospel as the only way to eternal salvation means it has universal relevance. As Carson (1996:314) states, 'we cannot envisage that that truth which has been graciously given, both in the public arena of history and in the private watch of transformed experience – truth given by the self-disclosing, personal/transcendent, Trinitarian God of Christian monotheism, the God who will not finally be gagged – is of merely idiosyncratic relevance.' Seeking converts to Christ is natural because of the treasures in the Gospel, and has been the tradition of the church from its earliest days (Green 2002:82-83). If the gospel of Christ is true, then 'to ignore him or treat him as one option among many is to defy God our Maker and Judge. And one day we shall give an account to him' (Carson 1996:345). For evangelicals the most unloving act and greatest crime against humanity is watering down or refraining from proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ across the globe.

Exclusivists look at the passages on the Great Commission and cannot but feel the power of the commandment to go urgently into all the world to preach the Gospel. Hesselgrave (1991:82) captures in a table the authority, enablement, the sphere, the message and the activities of the Great Commission. The table provides a comparison of the complimentary statements of the five versions of the Great Commission (one from each Gospel and one from Acts). Exclusivists find such a comprehensive table on the Great Commission compelling and impelling to their position.

One final and very important reason (noted above) for the exclusivist's position is that it sees those teachings and practices of other religions that have no Gospel or deny the Gospel 'as perilous' (Green 2002:77). Green (:77) sees the source, therefore, of false teaching as 'infection by spiritual forces that do not come from God, satanic influences that deceive people and lead them astray' (:77). Jones (1999:11) states that paganism's ultimate goal is 'the subversion of God's truth.' Green (2002:77) refers to Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, the lifelong missionary in India and then the West, whose knowledge of other religions was greater than any other living person (:77). He wrote a book called *The Finality of Christ*. In it 'he argues first that the demonic shows itself most of all in the arena of religion ... and he remarks on the care with which converts [to Christ] distance themselves from their inherited practices for that very reason' (:77). The role of the demonic, especially in the religious realm, accounts for the fact that the Bible allows for and condemns heresy. This activity of Satan's kingdom in religions makes the inclusivists hope of salvation through religions other than Christianity most suspect.

The writer of this dissertation takes the exclusivistic position, and will therefore approach discipleship of African converts in the Gospel accordingly. Exclusivism today is being increasingly countered by pluralism, parts of the African Renaissance (see Chapters 3 and 6) and to a lesser degree inclusivism. Clearly evangelicals ministering in Africa need to be well trained in pluralism, inclusivism and exclusivism and how to critique them from the evangelical perspective.

## **5. The summary and implications of the chapter**

This Chapter has presented evangelical beliefs and arguments for the plausibility of the evangelical view of the Scriptures – that they are divinely inspired and therefore authoritative for the Christian's faith and life. This defense was necessary as evangelical beliefs are frowned upon in the modern, postmodern and pluralistic world and are in danger of being emasculated. The evangelical view of the importance of discipleship, which includes protection from heresy, was noted. The section of the Chapter on evangelicalism was also deemed necessary because the dissertation is being conducted for the benefit of evangelical churches and their leaders in Africa. Further, since the dissertation is concerned with better discipleship of converts in Africa, any conclusions about what constitutes effective



discipleship in the evangelical church needed to be shown to be rooted in evangelical doctrine.

The rest of this Chapter dealt with modernism, postmodernism and pluralism. These three philosophies/ideologies have not yet significantly impacted Africa as a whole. However, they have had a major influence in the cities, especially among university lecturers, graduates, and those in senior positions in government, commerce and business. The public media has exposed many people in Africa, especially in South Africa, to modernism, postmodernism and pluralism. It will be argued further in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 that certain aspects of African traditional religions resonate with these ideologies and therefore inadequately disciplined Africans will be susceptible to them. Since this makes modernism, postmodernism and pluralism attractive to Africans, evangelical leaders need to be equipped to counter the elements in them that clash with Christianity and prepare the converts to withstand any negative influences from this front.

It was noted above that inclusivism can accommodate being saved through ATRs and therefore apparently also through a syncretistic merger of Christianity and ATRs. Inclusivists would no doubt argue that a knowledge of Christ as the sole way of salvation would make syncretism unacceptable. Since this dissertation argues for exclusivism because it is concluded that inclusivism has less biblical support, evangelical leaders in Africa need to be well acquainted with inclusivism and exclusivism. African converts will require patient and diligent discipleship if they are to be faithful to the exclusivistic position, which will necessitate weathering the storm of opposition their position creates in African traditional communities (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Evangelicals strongly believe that when through extensive discipleship Christianity is experienced in its purest form, it will be the best option for bringing about caring, humble, harmonious, moral, safe, serving, productive, developing and liberated societies. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 show that Christianity should not cause Christians to withdraw from active involvement in society. Their role as salt and light in the world (Mt 5:13-16) is achieved by being in the world (fully, dynamically and productively), but not of the world (alienated from its godless ethos, practices and direction) (see Chapters 4 and 5). Evangelicals therefore believe that thorough discipleship will strengthen the church and its transforming role in society and make modernism, postmodernism and pluralism less attractive to Christians and non-Christians.

Where in church history and current Africa adherents of Christianity have shown frailties and failures, it must be remembered that the fault was not with Jesus Christ, but with his followers. Evangelicals believe that the problem is never with Christ, but with his disciples – and especially their leaders – when not fully and totally focused on and devoted to him. Though arrogance, domination and racism have sadly marked the church at periods in its long history, ‘these are so obviously *betrayals* of the message; not its entailment’ (Peskest and Ramachandra 2003:73). Nkesiga (2005:149) maintains that ‘the custodians of the church might have failed, but not the ideal notions for which the church of Christ stands.’ Therefore evangelical pastors/leaders, black and white, working in Africa should be governed by the Bible and totally committed to its Gospel and lifestyle as understood in the light of the plot-line of the Bible. This means living and growing in the light of the salvation and sovereignty and supremacy of Christ in every sphere of life. This kind of life needs to be demonstrated/modeled to new converts and older untrained converts so that their growth into mature disciples of Christ will be ensured and speeded up. The importance of effective discipleship cannot be overstated if the world is to be persuaded that Christianity is the answer to the world’s many pressing and insoluble problems.

This Chapter has set the broader background against which the dissertation needs to be conducted.

## **African Traditional Religion**

The problem prompting this research stems largely from the interface of African Traditional Religions and Christianity. It is necessary, therefore, to look at African traditional religions and their influence on African cultures. Though Africa 'is a large continent with diverse people and culture ... there is a core of Africanness that runs through their cultures and religions. This core includes the common conceptions of the beliefs about the ancestors' (Idowu cited in Nyamiti [Online]). Mbiti (1969:103) describes this core as 'belief in God, existence of spirits, continuation of human life after death, magic and witchcraft.' This African core is defined by Mndende (2006:159,164) as 'The concepts of the Creator, ancestors and rituals [performances for the spiritual world]'. 'Thus it is not inappropriate to refer to Traditional African Religion as a whole without always emphasizing the differences which exist between the various traditions' (Thorpe 1991:106). This 'core of Africanness' also includes 'belief in ... the community' (Mndende 2006:163). Thus because of the common beliefs and practices in African traditional religions, one can talk of African traditional religion 'in the singular' (:158-159). It seems that African writers by and large avail themselves of the singular. Mbiti (1969:3) reminds his readers that this does not imply 'that everybody in ... [African] society subscribes to ...[every] belief or performs [every] ritual.' This Chapter will focus mainly on the 'core of Africanness', which will be called African Traditional Religion (ATR).

The beliefs about the ancestors and their impact on African beliefs and practices will receive more attention than the other features of ATR. This is because the role of the ancestors determines or influences almost every other belief and custom in ATR. Mtuzze (2003:1), with reference to the amaXhosa, describes this as follows: ancestral beliefs, beliefs about 'hidden presences', 'form the basis of Xhosa spirituality. Everything else flows from, and converges on them'; they are 'the essence of African culture' (:109). Thus Mtuzze (:52) states that when the missionaries 'tried to destroy the indigenous people's belief in their ancestors they, in fact, were destroying the very fabric on which African communities were founded.' Chapters 5 and 6 will question this statement by arguing that Christianity does not destroy one's

culture, but only prunes and enriches it. In the present Chapter specific attention will also be given to Xhosa traditions and spirituality as the writer works mostly with the amaXhosa.

It was noted in Chapter 2 that church-planting does not occur in a vacuum, and that part of the background (modernism, postmodernism and pluralism) to this process is impinging more and more on the African continent. But the major and immediate context in Africa is ATR. Certainly white evangelicals working in Africa need to be fully cognizant of ATR in order to be effective in ministry, especially in discipleship of converts in the Christian faith. However, the writer has also discovered that the black students he trains do not appreciate the impact of the worldview of ATR, especially the centrality of the ancestors, on every day life (see Chapters 5 and 6), and the implications for syncretism. African evangelical converts therefore need to understand the relationship between worldview and culture and that worldview change must precede cultural change if the latter is to be permanent (see Chapter 5).

## **1. Overview of African Traditional Religion**

### **1.1 Core beliefs**

#### **1.1.1 Belief in a Supreme Being, divinities, spirits and ancestors**

##### **1.1.1.1 Hierarchy of spiritual powers**

Apart from God (see below) the world is also populated with deities, spirits, and ancestors (Ngada and Mofokeng 2001:23) (see below). The spirit world ‘is graded in a hierarchical system’ (Craffert 1999b:36; also Nürnberger 2007:133). ‘Among the spirits, God is the highest’ (Nyamiti [Online]) and ‘is remote and inaccessible’ (Nürnberger 2007:133). The hierarchy in decreasing order is: God, deities, ancestors, spirits, humankind. Hierarchy also holds for the tribe, with the king/chief having the highest authority, then in decreasing order of authority, the elders, parents, and children. No one in the hierarchical structure in the universe can ‘transcend itself towards a higher authority’ (Nürnberger 2007:75). Only when the hierarchy of spiritual powers in the universe is intact does the universe have its distinctive and correct character (Craffert 1999b:36). The Supreme Being ‘legitimizes the hierarchical structure’ (Nürnberger 2007:75). Elements in this chain can ‘influence the elements or agents

higher up or lower down the chain' (Craffert 1999b:36). Every event 'has its chain of causation in which Power, or its lack, was the decisive agency' (:36). Take for instance a shepherd losing a sheep, where the cause is believed to be 'either the lack of protective Power of the shepherd or the superior malevolent Power of an enemy' (Wax cited in Craffert 1999b:36). Africans appeal to their living-dead (see below) 'to keep the danger of evil spirits at bay' because ancestors are higher in the hierarchy (Mtuze 2003:107). Religion is a way of taking seriously that humans are inescapably at the whim of the forces of the universe and provides 'a means of coping with these powers and [their] agents' (Craffert 1999b:37).

#### 1.1.1.2 Supreme Being

In most of Africa there is a belief in a personal Creator-God, the Supreme Being, who is eternal, omniscient and omnipotent (Mbiti 1969:39,29,30-34; Burnett 2000:34). After creation he more or less withdrew and is remote from peoples' daily affairs (Mbiti 1969:33). Though God is considered as distant, Imasogie (1983:66) states God is active through the divinities and ancestors, to whom he has delegated authority for the governance of the earth. They therefore 'act *in loco Dei* and *pro Deo*' (Pobee 1979:46). God is not considered a *deus remotus* or *deus otiosus* in an absolute sense (Thorpe 1991:108; Mtuze 2003:26,52,105) as he 'is never far from an African's thoughts or perceptions of the world' (Thorpe 1991:109), 'has veto power over his creation' (Imasogie 1983:56), 'in the final analysis, [is] behind all the events in the world' (Nyamiti [Online]), and provides all things needed to sustain creation (Mbiti 1969:41; Burnett 2000:34).

Africa abounds in creation legends. O'Donovan (1995: 80) relates one African traditional legend about the creation of humankind. It is similar to the biblical account. It sees God as the creator of the earth and all in it and heaven, the sun, moon, stars, clouds, and the first man and first woman to be his partner. Setiloane (2000:20), however, states that African myths of creation 'teach that the first appearance of people was as a group, a company.' This could be because the group is important in ATR and self identity is linked with group identity (see below). O'Donovan (1995: 87) notes that 'Most groups of traditional people have a story about the creation of man [sic] ... Sometimes these stories are similar to the Bible and sometimes they are different.' However, the creation stories are trivial and fanciful. It also seems that they do not support evolutionism. Mbiti (1969:92-95) also records a number of creation stories.

God is also transcendent: 'he is so far that people cannot reach him'; 'no one is beyond him'; 'He transcends all boundaries'; he is 'the unexplainable'; and his transcendence is the reason for problems of contact between him and the people (Mbiti 1969:32-33; also O'Donovan 1995:41 and Burnett 2000:31). God is respected and honoured for his position far above all his creation, all other divinities, spirits and people. 'The Supreme Being may be perceived to be the ultimate peak of the pyramid, but he is too remote and inaccessible to play a role in practical life' (Nürnberger 2007:75). God's transcendence 'has [also] led to the weakening of the cult due to Him, for he is so far removed as to have no interest in men' (Nyamiti 1987:62). Parratt (1987:62) sees this as explaining the focus on 'this-worldliness' (religious behaviour is centred mainly on living in this world) (see below).

God is seldom approached in prayer directly as communication with him is maintained largely through spirit mediators, usually the ancestors (see below) (Thorpe 1991:108; Junod and Mbiti cited in Mtuze 2003:41,43; Mtuze 2003:45; Mndende 2006:159). Mbiti (1969:61-66), however, refers to many African groups/tribes that do seem to pray to God without intermediaries 'at any time and in any place' (:65). In ATR all should go well with the people, i.e. they should experience health, strength and success if the balance of power in the universe is maintained (see below). When disturbed, it merely needs to be corrected through the help of a diviner/witch-doctor/medicine man or woman and certain rites. If all these measures fail to remove the illness or joblessness or some other misfortune, God may be approached (Burnett 2000:44). However, Mbiti (:65) states that though people may pray to God, 'it is often the head of the household, or priest where the need is on a regional or national scale, who prays on behalf of the household or the people.' The people approach the ancestors 'more often for minor needs of life than they approach God' (:83-84). Mbiti does not tell his readers what the minor needs are. However, when the problem relates to spirits or ancestors, which in practice seems to cover most sicknesses, misfortunes, failed crops, other losses, and even death, it seems the spirits and ancestors are always approached. Interest in God seems to be based on the anticipation of his readiness and willingness 'to help man [sic] in his terrestrial interests' rather than on who God is and his worship (Nyamiti [Online]). In African religion 'faith is utilitarian, not purely spiritual, it is practical and not mystical' (Mbiti 1969:67).

The prominence of intermediaries also stems from the fact that God 'cannot be approached directly' (Mtuze 2003:26). The custom of approaching a chief or king through intermediaries

is common in Africa (Parratt 1987:71; Mtuze 2003:26), and seems to be one of the explanations for the belief that God can only be approached through intermediaries (spirits, but especially the ancestors) (Mbiti 1969:68; Mtuze 2003:45). The ancestors' intermediary role is also deduced from the fact that they understand their living relatives' needs and are closer to God and have full access to him (Gehman 1989:141; Mbiti 1969:83). Put a little differently, the ancestors 'occupy the ontological position between ... God and men [sic]' and 'speak a bilingual language' – the language of the living and God (Mbiti 1969:69). Nyamiti ([Online]), though, states that the mediatory role of ancestors is not found in some African communities.

Setiloane (2000) has a whole chapter on the African's view of God, and argues that God is not conceived of as a being with personhood. Rather, he is 'understood to be something intangible, invincible, a natural phenomenon. He is able to penetrate and percolate into things' (:41). The dominant feature of the Divine is 'one of numinousness (inspiring, awesome ...)' (:41). He quotes approvingly Moffat's record of the Divine: 'something fearful, weird, monstrous, terrible' (:39). This picture of God could provide another explanation why dealings with him are minimal. Another explanation from Christianity why God is distant and not normally approached directly, is sin, as sin alienates the sinner from God and vice versa. Mbiti (:37) states that Africans view God as having a personality, will and goodness; but then he seems to contradict this by stating that there is almost nothing said about God's holiness, love and other moral attributes in African religion.

Because God seems far away, 'the words of the village elders and the will of the tribal ancestors seem to be much more important for daily living than the knowledge of God' (O'Donovan 1995:99). This means that contacting the ancestors, observing their traditions, and obeying them need not be seen as necessarily undermining belief in God and his sovereign will. This is why Mbiti (1969:58) sees sacrifices and offerings to ancestors as ultimately to God 'whether or not the worshippers are aware of that.' It is difficult not to conclude that such centrality of the ancestors detracts from God's worship and leads to idolatry (see Chapter 4).

#### 1.1.1.3 Deities/gods

People living in West Africa have large pantheons of gods/deities. In Central, Eastern and Southern Africa there is little or no belief in deities. These divinities are said to be ‘ministers of God, some of whom are said to have created the world.’ (Gehman 1989:124.) They apparently were created by God to ‘rule the world in theocratic form through delegated authority’ (:132). ‘Generally speaking, where a belief in ancestors predominates, fewer divinities are recognised’ (Thorpe 1991:115).

#### 1.1.1.4 Spirits and Ghosts

In African traditional religion there are spirit beings. Some spirits are ghosts, who are human spirits not accepted after death into the realm of the ancestors (see below). Spirits (but not ancestors) have their favourite haunts like ponds, caves, mountains, can live in animals, and may possess people. (Gehman 1989:138-139; Mbiti 1969:81; Nürnberger 2007:10.) In West Africa the activities of these spirits are more prominent than in Eastern and Southern Africa (Nürnberger 2007:9). Spirits can take on different shapes, e.g. human, animal, plant or inanimate object (Mbiti 1969:81). All spirits and ghosts are almost always malevolent, and their services may be enlisted (:81). Mbiti (:84-85) states that the living-dead – also spirits – after about five generations are no longer partly human and partly spirit, but only spirit. Power is needed for protection against malevolent spirits (Craffert 1999b:36). But because they are not all-powerful, humans can be protected against their machinations through ritually prepared medicine and amulets, provided by the ‘medicine men’ (Imasogie 1983:55,63). Traditional doctors and diviners can exorcise spirits from possessed people (Mbiti 1969:82). The traditional African ‘sees the activity of the spirits in everything that is unusual and different. Therefore, fear of spirits is found everywhere’ (Gehman 1989:171).

#### 1.1.1.5 Ancestors

Another and major category of the spiritual realm is the ancestors. “ ... with the possible exception of certain tribes, what is known as the ancestor cult is one of the most prominent features of traditional religion’ (Thorpe 1991:115). After death and appropriate burial rites (though this is not universal according to Nyamiti [Online]) it is believed the dead ‘depart this life for a spiritual realm, whence they will protect and direct their earthly relatives’ (Thorpe 1991:115; also Craffert 1999:69, Mndende 2006:163 and Imasogie 1983:57). What is important in the afterlife ‘is not the *after life* itself but the way in which the dead continue to



be involved in *this life* among the living’ (Ray cited in Manxale 2002:278). The living-dead are ‘regarded as powerful enough to keep the danger [of evil spirits] at bay’ (Mtuze 2003:106-107). Mtuze (:50) states that the ancestors represent God and exercise his delegated power: they ‘act on behalf of his family as a properly appointed ambassador-plenipotentiary.’

The living-dead ‘have to be mandated by the living people to act on their behalf. They have to be translated by the living into this new capacity [ancestralhood]’ by their children/family through correct burial rites (Mtuze 2003:50). If this process is not followed the spirit of the deceased remains a ghost. Thus Craffert (1999a:24) notes that ‘a distinction can be made between the common dead [ghosts] and the ancestors.’ To therefore ensure the superior ancestor state and the guarantee of ‘continuity in the nexus of family solidarity’, it is important to have children (Imasorgie 1983:59; also Nyamiti [Online]). ‘Hell in the afterlife means having no children to commemorate you when you are gone’ (Mugabe 1995b:13). It can be seen why Africans have large families and view childlessness as a tragedy (Imasorgie 1983:59; Pauw 1994:11) and accept early pregnancy out of wedlock as it proves fertility.

Nyamiti ([Online]) notes that a person must have been an ‘exemplar of conduct in the community’ and committed to ‘tribal tradition and its stability’ to qualify for ancestral status. Various African peoples believe certain people are disqualified after death from ancestral status: witches, outcasts, those not buried properly, those who died by hanging, drowning or lightning, those who died in pregnancy or accursed while living. Otherwise all, good and bad, live together in the world of the ancestors. Those excluded wander around aimlessly haunting certain places, entering animals, and generally molesting and harming people. (Imasorgie 1983:59; Gehman 1989:137, 140; Thorpe 1991:116.) Maboea (2002:39) seems to differ slightly from this view: ‘African tradition believes that there is no question of the spirit of any person being barred from the territory or world of the ancestral spirits.’ Imasorgie tells of an African tradition that the personality aspect of the soul is created prior to the body and chooses a detailed destiny it would like to live out on earth. If there is premature death, the person does not become an ancestor until the originally planned life-span is over. During this interim period the departed spirit is a ghost. (1983:57.)

The ancestral state is maintained as long as the ancestor is remembered by his/her living offspring. This period is about four generations – up to the death of the last relative to remember the ancestor, after which the ancestor ceases to have the same existence and may

wander as a ghost or congregate with other ghosts. The final state of the ancestor-turned-ghost is often not clear. (Burnett 2000:66.)

The ancestors 'watch over the inherited traditions, punish transgressors and bless their offspring' (Nürnberger 2007:54). It is important for the ancestors' benevolent intervention that they be respected, given offerings, honoured, obeyed, prayed to, and thanked regularly through sacrifice (Maboea 2002:12; Thorpe 1995:115). Offerings, like bowls of food and beer, are so that they will not get hungry in the other world (Stoltz 2007:3). Failure to remember and venerate ancestors in these ways results in withdrawal of their blessings and protection, especially from evil spirits (Mtuze 2003:53), leading to 'instability, poverty, misfortune, sickness and even death' (Maboea 2002:12; also Craffert 1999a:70, Nyamiti [Online], Mndende 2006:164 and Mbiti 1969:82,84). The ancestors clearly have superior power and status to the living (Mapoea 2002:40; Thorpe 1991:114) – 'more of the Divinity than the living ... more other because the limitations of the flesh have been removed' (Setiloane 1988:31, 32). The ancestors are therefore 'the 'spirits' with which African peoples are most concerned' (Mbiti 1969:83). Because of the deceased's power to harm, especially if not given the full burial rites, and to bless, people are 'careful to follow the proper practices and customs, especially regarding the burial' (Mbiti 1969:84).

The ancestors are not deities: 'In real African experience the ancestors are people rather than 'gods' ... the person of the ancestor is experienced as a 'person', not a deity or spirit' (Setiloane 1988:30). Human ancestors, unlike God, are 'not adored in African societies' (Nyamiti [Online]). Because of their nearness to God they communicate insights that can 'be relied upon as from the ultimate Reality (*Modimo*) and never misleading' (Setiloane 1988:32). Setiloane does not offer proof for this claim about the honesty of the ancestors. The ancestors and their traditions 'are recognized as a source of reference for an ethically acceptable life' (Parratt 1987:88).

There is no agreement on where the realm of the ancestors is. However, the mode of abode is modeled after life on earth, except that there are no marriages (Gehman 1989:140; Parratt 1987:87; Mbiti 1969:161; Mtuze 2003:48). 'Although the soul is separated from the body it is believed to retain most, if not all, of the physical-social characteristics of its human life' (Mbiti 1969:161). In view of this understanding of life after death 'it might be said that in African thought death leads into life' (Parratt 1987:87). The ancestors are closely associated

with their former home and place of burial, but can go wherever their living relatives might be (Gehman 1989:140; Mbiti 1969:160). Mbiti (1969:160) states that 'The majority of African peoples do not expect any form of judgment or reward in the hereafter.'

Ancestors are present in terms of authority, time, space, power and familiarity, but not in their vitality when alive; this ontological divide is bridged through rituals (Nürnberg 2007:51), dreams, illness, calamity, ecstasy and trance, visions, possession, diviners, prophets (Gehman 1989:142-143; cf Mtuze 2003:31 and Mndende 2006:166) and mediums (a trained person; other mediums include snakes, hyenas and caterpillars (Nyamiti [Online])). The SATV programme Special Assignment (2009) broadcast an interview with a white medical doctor who has also been trained as a traditional doctor and who combines both approaches to diagnosis and treatment of illnesses in his practice in California. He is the author of many books. He talked about various activities and medicines that bring a person into direct contact with the ancestors, e.g. sacrifice, which is the most effective way to force an encounter. The rest of this paragraph is gleaned from Maboea (2002:13-17). 'Some people claim to have been visited by ancestors physically and visibly during silent moments.' 'Some people maintain that the ancestors sometimes tell the living verbally what their needs are.' 'Visits by the ancestors are usually interpreted positively and regarded as very special events. Unless the ancestors indicate discontent, the living accept their visits as good omens.' The visitation might be to warn of danger, to provide guidance, to provide comfort in times of trouble, to intimate the intention to heal, or to reprimand the family over disputes and to admonish peaceful and caring living. The specific meaning of the visit must be deduced from the words and behaviour of the ancestor. A cup or plate held or food or drink requested is interpreted as a demand for appeasement through sacrifice. If the ancestor displays an unhappy face or turns away from the person visited, it means the relationship between them is not normal and must be corrected to avert misfortune.

Ancestors are believed to communicate life to the African. The great ancestor transmits life to his descendants; the father, leaders of a clan, and chief (or the king) represent the ancestors and are empowered by them to transmit life (Bujo cited in Bahemuka 1989:13). As the ancestral cult is 'limited to the ethnic group, no attempt is made to proselyte outsiders' (Nyamiti [Online]).

Because of the role of ancestors in relation to the living, Africans are under tremendous pressure to ensure their dead relatives achieve and maintain ancestorhood, as well as to do everything possible to attain and sustain ancestral status themselves after their death. The benefits for the living dead and the living are so great that no African can be expected to be neutral on this matter. Since the African traditionalist lives in close contact with his/her ancestors and other spirits, he/she is 'deeply characterized by magico-religious behaviour' (Nyamiti [Online]). It is understandable therefore that funeral rites are so important in African culture.

One can miss anything but not a funeral ... The whole funeral event starts with prayer meetings during the days preceding the actual funeral. The evening before the funeral the body of the deceased is taken to the house and kept in the room where the death had taken place. Candles are lit to keep the evil spirits away. Early the next morning the funeral is conducted. There is a meal after the funeral at the deceased's house (Stoltz 2007:4).

Funerals 'are very time-consuming, tiring, emotional and expensive rites' (:4). Stoltz (:4) who worked as a pastor-missionary in Botswana, states that the Tswana-culture can be referred to as a culture of funerals.

#### 1.1.2 The physical and metaphysical/spiritual worlds are interrelated

In ATR there is no separation of the sacred and the profane, the visible and the invisible. Everything 'is linked to everything else, both above and below' (Craffert 1999b:36). Therefore, 'For Africans religion is all-embracing: agriculture, social life, the political structure, economics – everything is imbued with religious significance. It follows there are no irreligious people in a tribal community' (Thorpe 1991:107; also Nürnberger 2007:9). The inter-connection between the physical and spiritual worlds means that 'every event has a metaphysical etiology' – there is nothing accidental (Imasorgie 1983:66; also Mbiti 1969:215). As noted above, there are also evil spirits operating in the invisible realm that can have negative influences on the physical realm. This means that 'without access to power or proper protection against malignant forces, the individual is vulnerable' (Craffert 1999b:36). 'The connection between cause (supernatural) and effect is immediate; secondary causes are either not admitted or considered negligible' (Nyamiti [Online]). There are always two questions to be answered when there is illness, death, an accident, barrenness, crop failure, or any other calamity: how did it happen and why did it happen. The answer to the why question is usually found in the realm of evil spirit powers or the ancestors (Parratt 1987:76). 'Natural

events and the morality of social relations are interrelated' (Parratt 1987:76). Accidents happen 'by design' and 'are blamed on a pranking fairy, a malevolent witch, a punishing ancestor or a jealous neighbour' (Craffert 1999b:37). Religion is the way of coping with the mysterious relationship between the spirit-world and all of life (Thorpe 1991:107).

The unity and balance between the powers, humans and nature are important in the hierarchical system of all reality for the universe to maintain 'its distinctive character' (Craffert 1999b:36). 'The solidarity and totality of the socio-cosmical universe determines all private initiative' (Nyamiti [Online]). The emphasis on the community (see below) 'means that misfortune is often viewed as due to a lack of harmony in the community, for example by neglect of the ancestors' (Williams 1992:8). It is easy to see why such beliefs lead to prominence being given to people and practices that can manipulate this mysterious relationship between the physical and the spirit worlds.

Though Spiritual Power is found everywhere, some places 'are recognized as specially sacred, e.g. mountains, graves, cattle kraals, the main hut, shrines, some rivers and forests' (Mndende 2006:197). For example, 'certain river pools are the dwelling of spirits' (Smith 1984:22-23). Certain drums among the Lotuho of Sudan 'are considered to have very potent spirit power' (:23). Various taboos exist in ATR to prevent disturbing the balance of powers in the cosmic arena that 'affect daily living' (:23) (see Section 2 of this Chapter). An example is abstaining from washing in a particularly sacred pool at the wrong season of the year as it would offend the spirits dwelling there (:23). 'Among the Lotuho, there is a right time to fish and a wrong time to fish in order to live in harmony with the river spirits. ... [and] the work [of repairing certain drums] is done with very great ceremony and care that the spirits will not be offended' (:23).

Smith (1984:21) provides a helpful way of grasping the contrasts between Western and African views of the world. For the West the world is a lifeless machine with no feelings, that merely needs to be studied to discover how it operates and then kept in good condition and operated as efficiently as possible in the most beneficial way to the operator. As long as the physical world is not completely destroyed, great changes, e.g. damming a river, cutting a road through a mountain, are totally justifiable. In ATR, however, the world is not a mere machine, and 'these changes affect the critical balance in the spirit world and may lead to unexpected disasters' (:21).

### 1.1.3 Life force and death

Life-force is also known as *nyama*, psychic force, energy, dynamism (Imasorgie 1983:54) and vitalism (Nyamiti [Online]). Teffo (1997:106; cf Louw [Online]) defines life-force as ‘an evident all-pervading energy ... which is inherent in everything [the whole universe].’ It therefore also permeates ‘rocks, trees, animals or mountains’ as well as people (Smith 1984:20). Nürnberger (2007:9) states that this life-force or vital-force found in all matter is impersonal. However, though this life-force can be ‘seen as an impersonal power residing in all nature’, it can become personal since it can ‘be ‘tapped’ and used’ (Teffo 1997:112; cf Theron 1996:2 and Setiloane 2000:24). Africans believe this life-giving power comes ultimately from God, and hence some African scholars object to categorizing this power as ever impersonal (Maboea 2002:13; Setiloane 2000:25; Nyamiti [Online]). This power can ‘be focused and concentrated in amulets, medicines and words, and enable people to do supernatural things’ (Teffo 1997:112; cf Nyamiti [Online]). Word is ‘vital force *par excellence* (hence the force of the name, ritual, word and myth)’ (Louw [Online]).

‘The world, inexhaustible source of life, is meant to reinforce the power of man [sic] so as to make him more living’ (Nyamiti [Online]). The ideal of African culture therefore ‘is coexistence and strengthening of vital force in the human community and the world at large’ (:3). For the African, life-force to live strongly is of supreme value, hence power ‘is the central paradigm of African philosophy, so what is always desired is its increase, what is feared is its decrease’ (Tempels cited in Williams 1992:4; cf Nyamiti [Online] and Nürnberger 2007:43). Nyamiti ([Online]) also captures the prominent place of dynamism in Africa: ‘The craving for power, safety, protection and life is the driving force in African religion.’

Death comes when this life-force or vital-force drops below a certain level; it is therefore preserved and strengthened in a variety of ways: through prayer, rituals, sacrifices, wisdom and proper behaviour (Thorpe 1991:112). ‘Appeasement of the ancestors by Africans, especially in time of trials, is done as a traditional act so that God, the source of life-giving power, may have mercy on those affected’ (Maboea 2002:12). Africans believe that normal life entails growing up, marrying, and bearing children, which is all made possible by this life-force (Thorpe 1991:115). Children are ‘seen to increase the parents’ vital force’

(Nasimiu-Wasike cited in Moila 2002:39). Amongst the Zulus life flows through one's children, and so marriage and child-bearing are important because they ensure the flow of life force (Moila 2002:21).

'It is incumbent upon each person to help preserve balance and maintain harmony, even in such matters as the distribution of dynamic life force' (Thorpe 1991:112). One must not be over-ambitious for more than one's fair share of power, which is behaviour typical of the sorcerer, as it is thought to be 'at the expense of somebody else' and causes jealousy and mistrust (Theron 1996:2-3).

'Power flows can be channeled into beneficial directions through rituals, conducted by authorized leaders of the community or into detrimental directions through magical means used by sorcerers and witches' (Nürnberg 2007:9). Protection against bad uses of life-force is therefore sought (Nürnberg 2007:9). A concise summary of life-force is given by Theron (1996:5). The role of spiritual power in ATR partly explains the prominent place traditional doctors hold in African societies.

Africans are not only keenly aware of their interrelatedness to one another, but also to all of nature (Thorpe 1991:120). '... everything is related internally to everything else ...' (Mtuze 2003:99). 'Hence pan-vitalism or cosmo-biology characterises the African worldview' (Nyamiti [Online]). It is probably through this universal life-force that all reality is considered to be related. African philosophy therefore makes Africans better keepers of the physical world.

'The actions of people are controlled by these powers [spiritual power or vital force], both for good and bad' (Smith 1984:20). It is this element of ATR more perhaps than anything else that holds back development in Africa as it undermines accountability and initiative (see below).

#### 1.1.4 Diviners, doctors, mediums, witches, sorcerers, prophets, priests and kings

Africans approach personal and community problems, crises and suffering holistically as noted above. They therefore look not only for physical or visible causes, but more specifically for an underlying spiritual (supernatural) cause. Either God, spirits, ancestors, a witch or

sorcerer (workers of evil magic) caused the suffering or whatever the evil (Mbiti 1969:215). The logic here is that ‘natural evil’ happens because these evil agents exist, and therefore without their wickedness the natural universe would run smoothly (:215).

Diviners are the specialists in diagnosing the spiritual causes and giving other information through recourse to the spirit realm, especially the ancestors. As Imasogie (1983:60) puts it: they are ‘able to decipher the past, the present and the future – as well as uncover the human and the spiritual causes of events and the possible solution to the problems of life.’ They are thus consulted whenever ‘evil attacks a community or an individual and the disruption of harmony and well-being becomes evident’ (Thorpe 1991:116). Mbiti (1969:178) admits divination is puzzling and that he has no way of understanding divination; however, he is convinced that it does include communication with non-human powers.

The healer/doctor (often a diviner as well) prescribes the remedy. Mbiti (1969:169) gives a summary of the herbalist’s duties: healing of sickness, disease and misfortune, and countering witchcraft and magic which are the real cause of the problem. Their method is a ‘remedy [that] may take the form of a ritualized observance such as the offering of a sacrifice, or of medicines which have symbolic as well as therapeutic value. The remedies sometimes seem to move out of the sphere of religion into that of magic’ (Thorpe 1991:116). Gehman (1989:116) explains this in terms of the occult/black magic: ‘It would appear that the evil spirits are closely identified with certain objects.’ Mbiti (1969:171) says medicine-men generally do not deal with the living-dead or spirits in their work. Though spirits are more powerful than people, ‘the right human specialists can manipulate or control the spirits as they wish’ (Mbiti 1969:79). ‘The fact that African traditional belief holds that no disease, misfortune or evil can attack one without a [spiritual] cause indicates the prominent role traditional healers play in African traditional society’ (Maboea 2002:15). Mbiti (1969:194-197) relates many incidents that show the reality of life-force and/or spiritual powers in amazing and disturbing miracles. There is no lack of evidence that these doctors achieve supernatural feats (Unger 1981:144).

It is thought that there are two kinds of supernatural power: personal supernaturalism and impersonal supernaturalism. The former refers to supernatural beings and the manifestation of their power, and the latter refers to powers that in themselves are capable of nothing until used by humans either beneficially or detrimentally. The latter sounds like life-force (see above).



(Pauw 1994:117.) When the power of the medicine doctor is used beneficially it is known as white magic; and when for harmful and destructive purposes it is called black magic. Through magic 'Countless cases of both healing and infliction of disease stand fully authenticated in antiquity, the Middle Ages, and modern times' (Unger 1981:144).

Mediums connect people to their living-dead and other spirits, and only function when 'possessed' by a spirit or living-dead (Mbiti 1969:86,171,172). The medium sometimes works with a diviner or medicine-man (:172). During possession a medium temporarily loses control of his/her personality and 'depicts or mirrors the influence or semi-personality of the spirit or divinity in him' (Mbiti 1969:176). Most diviners are men and most mediums are women (:178).

Chapter 4 will consider possible explanations from a biblical perspective of the methodology of the doctors and mediums – the source of these practitioners' power and the identity of the spirits encountered by them.

Witches and sorcerers practice 'black magic' which 'inflicts disruption and imbalance on society as selfish [evil] ends are pursued' (Thorpe 1991:116). 'When tensions appear in a community, outwardly manifested in barrenness in women, natural disasters, infertility of crops or animals and the like, witchcraft is suspected' (Thorpe 1991:114). The belief is strong in Africa that when a witch 'eats the flesh of a person, the person becomes weak and sick and finally dies' (O'Donovan 1995:311). Remedies to counter witchcraft are both preventative and curative, and 'are rites and rituals, which include such things as amulets, sacrifice, dancing and other forms of art' (Thorpe 1991:114). The remedies are revealed to the diviners and traditional doctors usually by the ancestors. Sometimes traditional doctors and diviners are suspected of sorcery 'because of their tremendous power and insight' (Thorpe 1991:116).

There are various periods of training – an apprenticeship – to become any one of the above practitioners. The powers and magical abilities 'are passed on in hereditary succession frequently through four generations' (Unger 1981:81). Mbiti (1969:166-167) describes other non-hereditary callings, but does acknowledge that one way of entering the profession is when it is passed on to a 'son or other younger relative.' Unger (1981:82) refers to various districts of Europe 'where magic literature has circulated for centuries and magical powers have been passed from one generation to another.'

‘From time to time prophetic figures arise who do not seem to support the status quo but call the people to a new kind of life’ (Thorpe 1991:116). Some tribes have priests. The priest’s distinctive mark ‘is his authority in the area of ritual and symbolic action’ (Thorpe 1991:117). ‘The priest is the chief intermediary: he stands between God, or divinity, and men [sic]’ (Mbiti 1969:188). Some tribes also have sacred kingship. ‘In the case of all these authority figures, the real purpose of their activity is the maintenance of harmony within the social group’ (Thorpe 1991:117) and thereby prevent misfortune and disaster.

Mbiti (1969:195-196) is critical of the West’s interpretation of the mystical powers experienced in African traditional religion. He is adamant that in the traditional environment this power is often experienced ‘in the form of magic, divination, witchcraft and mysterious phenomena that seem to defy ... scientific explanations.’ The section below on the Xhosa traditions will illustrate some of these ‘mysterious phenomena.’ Chapter 4 will also consider the fact that this mysterious power can be used for good and evil (cf Mbiti 1969). Mbiti (1969:198) states that there are hundreds of articles that are visible signs everywhere in the traditionalist’s world; some for protection from the mysterious powers and some for good health, fortune or prosperity.

#### 1.1.5 Community is central

‘There is no doubt that communal cohesion is one of the outstanding characteristics of African pre-modern culture and religion’ (Nürnberg 2007:72). In ATR community is central and membership is what gives significance to individuals. Williams (1992:2) suggests a possible explanation for this corporate identity: to compensate for God being viewed as apart from the affairs of the people ‘the relationship between men [sic] is strengthened, giving rise to the strong sense of community.’ Setiloane (2000:26) offers another explanation: participation in vital-force or life-force ‘forms the very soul of the community body’ and provides the ‘element of ‘belonging.’ ’ Another reason for the strong group identity is that the group ‘is understood to antedate the individual’ (Thorpe 1991:110). A further reason is that each individual gains his/her meaning and identity from being part of the group: ‘Each person **is** because the other person **is**. Each person exists because the other person exists’ (Mtuze 2003:98). Louw ([Online]) mentions the Zulu maxim, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which means ‘a person is a person through other persons’; another way of phrasing this concept is ‘I

am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am' (Mbiti 1969:108-109). Thus the African's 'full humanity is only experienced in relation to the group' (Williams 1992:6). A person is therefore 'never isolated but is part and parcel of his/her family and community' (Mndende 2006:162). 'For black Africans, living means existing in the bosom of the community' (Theron 1996:4). 'The commitment of the individual to his/her family group embraces his/her whole life – religious life, economic life, social life etcetera' (Moila 2002:5). A communal culture is characterized by dependency. This means 'one is neither able nor entitled to fend for oneself without the guidance and assistance of relevant communal authorities' (Nürnbergger 2007:47). The African family 'includes all those who share the same clan names' (Mndende 2006:161). Membership of the community 'is perceived as a lengthy process': courtship and marriage rituals, additional rites to sustain life force during the growing years, and the initiation ritual (Thorpe 1991:113).

African culture 'believes in solidarity instead of isolationism and competition, ...[and] strives for sharing and indwelling instead of polarity and selfishness' (Mtuze 2003:103). 'African examples of caring and sharing and of forgiving and reconciliation abound. Ask any South African' (Louw [Online]). In African societies kinship serves as 'a strong motivating factor in people's caring gestures' (Kinoti cited in Moila 2002:93). The emphasis on community explains why 'one person's happiness is happiness for all and one person's sorrow is sorrow for all' (Moila 2002:4). The stress on reconciliation and belonging to a community counters loneliness. Life in the community is to be enjoyed and experienced in fullness (Thorpe 1991:112). Thorpe (1991:112) succinctly catches the ethos of African communal life:

... each African is made acutely aware that individual life and happiness are not possible in isolation and apart from other people, because life is something communal and can only be manifested properly and adequately in a network of interdependencies between persons and community. Accordingly, in all life's pursuits, Africans will always strive to maintain a dynamic relationship with the extended family, clan or tribe, including the ancestors, God and nature.

*Ubuntu* is the term that captures the community spirit in African communities: it stresses the values of respect, human dignity and compassion (see below). Where the community in society is not central and crucial, as in the West, there is less cohesion in society and less loyalty to and identification with those of the same ethnic-cultural group.

Williams (1993:1) suggests that community and relationships are ‘too strong to be severed by death’ and hence ‘the position of ancestors in the African world-view.’ Since the community encompasses the living and the ancestors, relationships between these two groups are also hugely important. The powerful ties between the living and the dead create ‘a chain which binds each person horizontally to the other members of the tribe, and vertically to both the deceased ancestors and coming generations’ (Thorpe 1991:120). In African traditional societies food at meal times is shared with the ancestors because this ‘symbolises a harmonious relationship between the ancestors and their descendents’ (Moila 2002:3).

On occasions for dealing with problems and performing rites of passage in the community, solidarity is strengthened by requiring all the members’ participation and the sharing of a common meal (Thorpe 1991:121-122). But these and other public rites also have the effect of strengthening the solidarity between the living and the dead (Parratt 1987:88).

An authority structure is recognized in African societies – societies that include the living and the living-dead – which helps maintain order and unity (Mtuze 2003:106). Authority is generally speaking ‘vested in those whose lives have covered a long period. ... [and] Those who have advanced to a spirit state [‘the living dead’] have more authority than fleshly human beings [the living]’ (Thorpe 1991:114). Ancestors, based on their seniority and new status, are viewed as ‘the custodians of the community and its continuing well-being’ (:107). This involves the living obeying the ancestors and keeping their traditions; and failure to do so leads to their retributive anger (Mtuze 2003:75). The corporate emphasis results in the whole community playing a role in decision-making: ‘Everything in African societies is based on communal concepts, that is, any decision is taken by the community’ (Moila 2002:40).

Because of the importance of the group, being in the right relationship with the community is extremely important. Further, this means that anything that disrupts personal well-being, balance, harmony and order in the community, is viewed as evil and to be sought out and eradicated through an appropriate remedy (Thorpe 1991:107, 111, 113). There is a negative side to this approach to community: its ‘desire for consensus also has a potential dark side in terms of which it demands an oppressive conformity and loyalty to the group. Failure to conform will be met by harsh punitive measures’ (cited in Louw [Online]). Thus the community determines the limits for the individual; and ‘Any loner, any individual off by

himself, will be feared and rejected as a possible witch' (Gehman 1989:51). In the light of the perceived role of the ancestors in African society it is no wonder that society seeks 'to maintain at all costs the harmony between the living and the living-dead' (Mtuze 2003:104).

## 1.2 Special focus on the traditions of the Xhosa people

The writer lives and works in Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape with mostly Xhosa people. Chapter 5 deals with worldview and culture and their relevance to Christian discipleship. For this reason the writer felt more detail on the amaXhosa would make more effective the application of the discipleship model built on the first six Chapters of this research. The Xhosa people constitute one of the biggest and best known race groups in South Africa – nearly 20% of the population (Hendriks and Erasmus 2001:41). They live throughout South Africa, but mainly in the Eastern Cape on the country's eastern seaboard in an area from the Keiskama River to the Bashee River and extending in the middle westward for about 250 kilometres. In the 1996 census it was revealed that the non-urban population in the country was 46.3% of the total population (Hendriks and Erasmus 2001:41). This indicates that there is a significant number of rural Xhosas in South Africa. The Xhosa-speaking people, especially the urban ones, have been affected by Western culture, especially through the public media, resulting in some dilution or neglect of their beliefs and traditions. However, since ATR – orally passed down for many centuries – constitutes the under-current of the urban Xhosa (this has been the writer's experience; see also below), it is necessary to study the traditional Xhosa purists known as the Red Blankets. The name is derived from 'their colourful dress, which is basically a cotton or woolen blanket dyed a deep-brick colour with red ochre' (Elliott 1970:13).

### 1.2.1 Their beliefs about God and the ancestors (*izinyanya*)

The amaXhosa believe in a supreme Creator called *Qamata*, whom the missionaries named *Thixo* (Mtuze 2003:44), who is transcendent, maintains the cosmos and watches over it (Mtuze 2003:26; Pauw 1994:118). 'He does not interfere with the daily affairs of earth', but is responsible for natural disasters, droughts, thunderstorms, lightning and rain (Pauw 1994:118). The ancestors act as intermediaries between the living and the Deity (Mtuze 2003:25,62). The living and their ancestors have a mutual influence on each other (Pauw 1994:119). The ancestors receive their power from God (:118). They 'receive the offerings

and sacrifices, and then relay people's requests to God' (Mtuze 2003:50,45). No ritual worship to God is performed; and prayer to God is restricted to occasional requests (Pauw 1994:118). The ancestral cult forms the central part of the religion (:119). Mtuze (2003:8,40) states that the amaXhosa do not worship the ancestors. However, Elliott (1970:125,126) states 'The Xhosa creed is ancestor worship' because he feels the sacrifices are not offered to God through the ancestors, but rather exclusively to the ancestors. Ultimately God is behind the 'social order and the habits and customs of the Xhosa. Violations of the customs are punished by him' (Pauw 1994:118). Prayer is not offered to the ancestors because they know everything; rather the living merely talk to the ancestral spirits as if they were discussing a matter with a friend (Elliott 1970:127). The ancestors live much as they did on earth and have 'human needs like hunger and thirst' (Mtuze 2003:48; also Pauw 1994:119). This would imply the ancestors are not worshipped.

Each family has a collection of non-physical animals, especially elephants, lions, leopards, snakes, bees, crocodiles, and otters. These are linked to the ancestors. These animals apparently look after the family at night. They are known as the *Izilo*. The ancestors come through these animals to the living. The ancestral spirits communicate through dreams about these animals. Witch-doctors interpret the dreams. (Elliott 1970:127; Pauw 1994:119.)

When a member of a family dies, an animal is sacrificed to send the spirit on its way, and to remove the contamination experienced through touching the ill person and subsequently the corpse because of the view that death is caused by witchcraft. The corpse is carefully watched until buried to ensure no sorcerer can get the body or any part of it to use as a familiar or for the harming of others through black magic. About a year later a sacrifice is offered to the deceased to bring the departed spirit back, and make it and the family's wild animals contented. This ensures protection from evil and of the home. (Elliott 1970:129-130; cf Pauw 1994:39-42.)

The choice of an animal to be offered to an ancestor 'is usually made by a witch-doctor after he has consulted with the spirits' (Elliott 1970:132; see below). It may be an animal consistently dreamed about, or the choice of the head of the family himself. Other foods besides meat, namely beer and tobacco, are also offered to the ancestors. Panic sets in if the goat or cow/bull to be sacrificed to the ancestors does not bleat or bellow when about to be killed; this is because this failure is taken to mean that the ancestors will not be summoned

because they are displeased, and therefore the sacrifice will not be acceptable to them. The animal is literally tortured in order to get it to bleat/bellow. (Elliott 1970:59,132; cf Pauw 1994:29,121.) Elliott (1970:135) relates just such an episode and summarizes his reaction: 'All this time I had been ... horrified, watching the torture'.

The power of the ancestors over the people is well and tragically demonstrated in the Xhosa national suicide during the nineteenth century. The ancestral spirits apparently communicated through a girl, *Unongqawuze*, and her uncle/father, *Umhlakaza*, that they would deliver the amaXhosa from the white oppressors if they would exterminate all their (amaXhosa) cattle, throw away all their grain and stop cultivating the land. The white men would be turned into mice, frogs and ants, or blown into the sea. The unbelieving, uncooperative Xhosa would be overtaken by terrible horrors. When the deliverance came crops and great herds would suddenly appear. Thousands of the amaXhosa died as a result of believing the message, and thousands flocked to the colonists where they begged for food and work. (Elliott 1970:13-23.)

#### 1.2.2 Living in a world of witches, spirits, sprites and people of the river

The witch works with spirits and through supernatural agents known as familiars. The best known familiars are the water snake *Ichanti*, the lightning bird *Impundulu*, and the watersprite *Tokoloshe*. It is said that witches feed them in exchange for their services of doing their evil bidding. Apparently they are 'sent' into people or make themselves invisible and put medicines into people's food to make them sick. Female witches are believed to travel around at night in a 'cage.' Male witches are thought to ride baboons on their errands. (Elliott 1970:109,110.)

The *iChanti* is 'a feared magical snake' (Mtuze 2003:58). The *Ichanti* is believed to be able to 'change himself into anything from an old kettle to an animal or a necklace and back into a snake at will', which makes the amaXhosa 'very much afraid of him, as they never know when he is around' (Elliott 1970:110). This small pitch-black snake is kept by a witch and used to inflict illness and even death (Pauw 1994:129). Elliott (1970:110) relates a firsthand story of a visitation of *Ichanti* one night resulting in one child waking up screaming and stomach churning with wind. *Ichanti* is one of the easiest familiars to kill 'if you have magic medicine made from the fat of another *ichanti* and its ground-up bones' (Elliott 1970:110).

The *Impundulu* is a bird about the size of a man. It is believed to make storms and lightning. The amaXhosa 'say that when he strikes, it is because he has been sent by a witch to destroy an enemy or his property or else he is just amusing himself 'kicking' someone.' (Elliott 1970:111.) It is said to be extremely vicious and 'causes the death of innumerable people' (Mtuze 2003:57; cf Pauw 1994:129), and 'to be owned by women exclusively' (Mtuze 2003:57). He can change himself into a dog or a motor-car or a man, and seduce a woman and pursue a sexual relationship with her, for which he will act as her familiar for exercising witchcraft on her enemies. If he appears in public it is in a black suit; and if people discern who he is and have been treated with special medicine, they can kill him. From his fat and flesh they make medicine that immunizes anyone against strong lightning. (Elliott 1970:111-112.)

The *Tokoloshe* is a small person of about two feet high with grey hair and a beard down to the knees. He is not naturally invisible, but can make himself so with a little pebble (*ikhubalo*, charm). There are males and females and they can have children. He is a lovable fellow but terribly mischievous; yet he has a bad reputation because he is usually kept by a witch. She feeds him and lets him make love to her for which he is obliged to carry out her evil missions. If seen and caught without his pebble he can be killed or made to work for one. Strong medicines can be sprinkled that cause Tokoloshe to become visible and paralyzed if he walks on them. Then he can be killed. The fat from his body and ground-up bones makes potent medicine which can be sold at a high price. (Elliott 1970:112-113; also Hoernle cited in Mtuze 2003:55-56 and Pauw 1994:129.)

Mtuze (2003:58) refers to two other evil and dreaded spirits/familiars with frightening powers: a snake (*umamlambo*) and a resurrected deceased (*isithunzela*). Pauw (1994:129-131) lists another four: frogs (*amasele*), baboons (*imfene*), jackal-buzzards (*ingqanga*) and cats (*impaka*).

The Xhosa hut must have its door and window closed tightly at night 'to keep out witches and the mischievous water sprite called *Tokoloshe*' who is also known as *Tikoloshe* (Elliott 1970:27). They could drop a stone through the window on someone's head or 'blow magic medicine in over the sleeping people and make them sick or bring all kinds of other evil upon them' (:27). Every family has its cattle kraal where 'the family makes ritual sacrifices to its ancestors and where they carry out various tribal customs' (:30-31). When a Xhosa's hair is



shaved off, every visible piece of it is guarded 'so that the birds cannot take it off to their nests'. It is buried secretly 'under the brush of the cattle kraal.' This practice is because human hair can become one of the most dangerous 'medicines,' and therefore to be kept from the hands of witches. When the witch uses it as an ingredient in a magic mixture she can cast all kinds of spells over its owner. Hair can also be used to make a love-potion to force love from a disinterested person. (:33.)

A married woman wears 'necklaces of cow tail or of roots, or even bones, for magic protection [from evil spirits] and healing;' and she wears brass bangles from her wrist to her elbows so that she does not upset her ancestors and be punished by them with sickness or some evil (Elliott 1970:33). To protect the newly-born child from evil spirits 'the mother hangs up special roots in the thatch above its sleeping place' (:56). The baby also wears a cow hair necklace to keep away evil spirits (:57). A baby is swung through the smoke of burning leaves of the *umnikandiba* plant 'to ward off evil spirits' (Mtuze 2003:95). A white goat is sacrificed in nearly all facets of Xhosa life, and the correct procedures must be followed if protection from evil spirits is to be achieved.

The People of the River are those people who are believed to live under the water in dry homes. They have herds of cattle, dogs and fowls and other things that the amaXhosa have on earth. Drowned people who are never seen again are believed to have been taken by the People of the River to their abode, where they are trained to be witch-doctors of the most powerful kind. They are sent back to their kraals when it is time for them to practice. People are prepared to pay anything for their services. The People of the River are believed to be good and appreciative people. Offerings – an ox or a goat – are made to them to receive their goodwill and rewards. A sacrifice to the People is repaid many times over, e.g. a strangely appearing cow and calf can be the reward. If the People are satisfied with the offering it is believed they will protect the whole family together with the invisible wild animals in whom ancestors come to look after the living family. (Elliott 1970:101; Pauw 1994: 119,125-126.)

'The Xhosa belief in their magic and the mysteries that it encompasses holds tremendous power over their lives. Their ideas are sometimes so strong that once any particular mystical belief has dictated a course just about nothing, not even death, is allowed to interfere with it' (Elliott 1970:101). The Xhosa life is full of taboos and omens (:104), which need to be

observed to prevent arousing the wrath of the ancestors and for protection against witchcraft and sorcery (cf Pauw 1994).

### 1.2.3 Doctors: diviner (*igqirha*) and herbalist (*ixhwele*)

#### 1.2.3.1 Their work, call and training

There are a number of different types of diviners among the amaXhosa who are distinguished by their method (Pauw 1994:122-123). The diviners usually extend their knowledge of medicine so that they can practice as herbalists (:137). These traditional doctors are commonly known as *sangomas* or witch-doctors by Westerners in South Africa. It is the Zulu word for diviner or witchfinder. 'Witch-doctors [*amagqirha*] are usually called to the profession by ancestral spirits', sometimes a distant ancestor who was a witch-doctor (Elliott 1970:115; also Pauw 1994:125). This call takes the form of a long illness, peculiar behaviour, and 'consistent dreams of the imaginary wild animals which attach themselves to each Xhosa family, because spirits approach people on earth through them' (Elliott 1970:116; cf Louw 1994:125). Confirmation that these symptoms indicate a call to be a witch-doctor are confirmed by a witch-doctor (Elliot 1970:116). Many Xhosas 'believe that anyone who disregards the call is liable to become ill and even die' (:118). The neophyte's training may take many years, and a sacrifice during the training is offered to his/her ancestors (food for them) to ensure a successful career (:118; cf Pauw 1994:125). The South African Broadcasting Corporation has given television coverage to the training and inauguration ceremony of sangomas showing that they are possessed by spirits and operate through them.

The herbalist works with different medicines, 'mainly to manipulate magical powers beneficially or detrimentally' (Pauw 1994:126). The medicines include bark, roots, leaves and bulbs (:127). 'Some herbalists have divining spirits that help them in the execution of their duties' (:126). The herbalist or medicine man is not called to the profession by the ancestors, and is trained under a qualified herbalist (:127).

#### 1.2.3.2 Divining methods

There are three methods of divining to be found amongst Xhosa witch-doctors: the *Nomatotolo*, the throwing of bones, and *Vumisa*. In the first, tiny little messengers called

*Nomatotolo*, about the size of an olive, speed away during a séance to find out at the appropriate place in the world what the witch-doctor wants to know. They report back in high-pitched ‘whistling’ voices. These doctors because of their mysterious powers command a great amount of respect and leave audiences overawed. (Elliott 1970:118.) In the second method the scattered bones are interpreted by the witch-doctor while in a trance to provide the ancestors’ answer (:118). In the third and most common method of divination the witch-doctor sits in a circle with those who have engaged him/her to sniff out a witch, or for example, to find where their stolen cattle are. The witch-doctor is not told in advance why they have come and must find out through a series of questions to which the audience either answers “We agree” (“*Siyavuma*”) if he/she is on the wrong track, or “Throw behind” (“*Posa ngasemva*”) if he/she is right. If an animal is sick the witch-doctor might blame a witch and indicate indirectly or directly who the witch is. The elders of the kraal decide on the penalty, usually being hounded out of the area. The view of the audience as to who they feel is guilty is cleverly discerned by the witch-doctor and his verdict usually coincides with theirs. (Elliott 1970:118-119; Pauw 1994:126.) Elliott (1970:123) tells of a famous witch-doctor who could ‘see’ where stray animals were.

#### 1.2.3.3 Rain-making

Some witch-doctors specialize in rain-making. To do so ‘it is necessary to sacrifice ... to the ancestral spirits a dark coloured ox, the colour of storm clouds’ (Elliott 1970:122).

#### 1.2.3.4 Dress

Witch-doctors always wear white, apparently because white is the colour associated with ancestors; it ‘is a symbol of purity and good’ (Elliott 1970:119).

#### 1.2.4 Community and hospitality

Apart from a strong community ethos, the amaXhosa are also in community with the physical world (Elliott 1970:40). Their fine hospitality and unselfish sharing derive from their understanding and practice of community; every one is automatically invited to kraal beer-drinks or feasts and expected to stay until supplies of drink and meat have been consumed (:41). The writer has noticed at special functions, like the Bible Institute Eastern Cape’s

graduations, that the black community has this mentality that the eats afterwards are there to be enjoyed until they are finished. The sad concomitant feature is that those collecting their eats first do not consider it culturally appropriate to have less in order to ensure that everybody has some eats before seconds are taken.

#### 1.2.5 After-life

The realm of the ancestors is not very different from this life. For instance sowing and cultivating of crops take place (Mtuze 2003:25). This is why for instance the Xhosa man's burial is accompanied with his pipe, tobacco, and sometimes a stick, a spear and a shield (:25). Ancestors are 'much like as when they were in this world' (:48).

#### 1.2.6 Pre-marital sexual behaviour

Pauw notes that Xhosa girls pass through a kind of initiation into adulthood called *ukuthombisa*, usually after their first menstruation. After this ceremony, in which the blessings of the ancestors are sought, the girl enters into sexual relationships with boys (*ukumetsha*). These pre-marital sexual relationships are condoned provided there is no impregnation (see Chapter 6). (1994:18.) The male circumcision ritual is thought to encourage premarital sex (see Section 5.1.2.2 of Chapter 6). Any Christian model of discipleship must face up to the non-Christian behaviour in any country that spreads HIV with all the resulting trauma, suffering and devastation (see Chapter 6).

#### 1.2.7 Conclusion

This brief excursion into Xhosa religious beliefs and customs has clearly confirmed the claim that one can speak of a universal ATR. To the evangelical some of the Xhosa beliefs and practices have brought the amaXhosa into bondage to an incredible range of taboos, rituals, customs, spirits, familiars and the traditional religious specialists. The fear of the supernatural world among the amaXhosa is real (see below). Though Western evangelical Christians have their minor concerns about their safety, physical needs and fulfilment, their approach to life is many times less complicated and more predictable than it is for the amaXhosa. The gap between ATR and Christianity in the Western world makes it extremely hard for Western Christians to believe all the features, especially the miraculous, of ATR. Because the writer

was brought up in Western ways it would seem audacious for him to embark on a project related to African Christians. He begs the African readers nevertheless to graciously read this dissertation. Feedback will enable him to see his limitations and the inaccurate and incorrect statements, and make the necessary corrections to the dissertation. Hearing from evangelical black pastors and teachers will further the writer's education in ATR.

## **2. The influence of the ancestral cult on the life of Africans**

From this Chapter so far and the writer's own experiences with the amaXhosa, he is convinced that the beliefs about the ancestors largely shape life in Africa, especially rural communities. Spelt out more fully, the ancestral cult directly or indirectly and to different degrees, influences the African's inner psychology and also personal, communal, social, political, economic and religious behaviour. If this conclusion is correct, evangelical leaders in Africa will need to better appreciate the role of the ancestors in ATR and the challenge this presents. This is essential if a more effective discipleship model, acceptable to evangelicals, is to be developed. The influence of the ancestors is now taken up.

### **2.1 Ancestors and the rites of passage**

#### **2.1.1 Birth**

The birth and survival of children are religiously important for the parents as noted above. Thus there are many customs (e.g. *imbeleko* among the amaXhosa) to ensure the safety of the newborn: prayers are offered to ancestors and rarely to God; offerings including a goat are made to the ancestors, purification rites are performed for the mother, and amulets are used to protect the child from danger and harm from witchcraft and sorcery (Gehman 1989:24; Pauw 1994:10-12). If the *imbeleko* rites are not conducted it can be expected that a child might behave in an inhuman way (Ngada and Mofokeng 2001:24). The ancestors are also brought into the picture because the child is as much their child as the child of the living (Gehman 1989:52).

#### **2.1.2 Puberty**

Puberty is the time of transition from childhood to adulthood marked by rituals - usually the rite of circumcision. Sometimes clitoridectomy is practiced. These practices lead to full membership of the clan/tribe. During this rite the young people are initiated 'into the secrets of sex, reproduction, marriage, and family life' (O'Donovan 1995:232). Failure to participate in this ritual will result in still being regarded as a child. In Xhosa tradition a boy is a thing or a dog; and this status is only really changed after circumcision (Elliott 1970:83,84).

Gehman (1989:53) notes that careful scrutiny of the circumcision rite reveals that it has religious significance. Since this rite 'is closely connected with a person's sense of identity with his or her extended family and clan, the initiation process is also full of religious and traditional meaning' (O'Donovan 1995:233; also Pauw 1994:13-17). The rite brings the young adults 'once again into contact with the spirit world' (Ngada and Mofokeng 2001:24). It is a rite 'whereby man is plunged into the mythical time of the ancestor' (Nyamiti [Online]). The Xhosa circumcision rite traditionally takes about three months. It has two phases, a 'going in' and a 'going out,' the latter phase taking place after a period of isolation following the surgical operation (Elliott 1970:83). The going in ceremony involves a necklace which 'is a supplication to the boy's ancestors to give him wisdom and strength', and a goat is sacrificed at the place where most offerings are made to the ancestors (:83-84).

### 2.1.3 Marriage

Since children are so important in Africa, as they ensure that their parents attain immortality with the ancestors, marriage (together with children) is central to all life and considered a failure if no children are born. It was pointed out above that fear is created when the dead person remains a ghost, which happens if there are no descendants to perform the burial rites and venerate him/her, because of the negative consequences. No wonder that the unmarried person is viewed with disdain and rejected. 'Both the living and departed together with those yet unborn meet together at this key point [marriage]. For the very future of the community depends upon a succession of descendants' (Gehman 1989:53). Some animal may be sacrificed 'with portions given to the ancestral spirits,' and the couple is smeared with the gall and entrails, and adorned with wristlets or necklaces made from the animal. Prayer is offered to the ancestors. All this ritual is to gain the care of the ancestors for the husband and wife. (Gehman 1989:144.)

Polygamy has been practised in Africa. It ensures children, which means a longer and happier immortality for the parents, more economic help for the family, more wealth for the husband, and cumulatively more status in the community (Gehman 1989:54).

#### 2.1.4 Death

It has been demonstrated above that the focus during burial rites is strongly on the ancestors. After death the ancestor ‘continues to maintain living relationships with the living, bringing both benefits and trouble’ (Gehman 1989:54). It is because of this role of the ancestors that the time of death and burial is marked by appropriate rites to ensure the departed becomes a contented ancestor.

As noted above, though illness and death are inevitable and thus natural in one sense, they are normally considered the result of external forces like witchcraft, or an evil spirit, or a disgruntled ancestor or even the summoning of God. Death thus results from disrupting the peaceful balance in the world and therefore its cause must be ascertained and rituals performed to restore order. (Gehman 1989:54; Mbiti 1969:44,155.) ‘Such a view of death, does tend to deny any responsibility by man [sic]’ (Williams 1992:15). A good example of this is the number of Africans who do not see death through HIV/AIDS as coming from a deadly virus transmitted in irresponsible sex and that therefore they are culpable for contracting HIV. Instead of blaming the practice of multiple sexual partners and resulting contraction of HIV/AIDS, ‘Neighbours [in Lusikisiki] are blamed for using magic [bewitching/demons] to infect [with HIV] the beautiful and the successful’ (Steinberg 2008:7; also see :15,26,131-133,185,215-216). Because death is usually thought to be caused by external forces, it ‘is followed by thorough investigation as to the cause of death’; in this investigation ‘the traditional medicine man has a central function’ (Gehman 1989:54). Because death results from the disruption of the peaceful balance in the world, ritual and ceremony ‘are necessary in order to restore that peaceful balance’ (Gehman 1989:54).

#### 2.2 Ancestors and the cycle of seasons and other special occasions

‘Throughout the year, there are special occasions determined by the seasons, when the living-dead are specially remembered’ (Gehman 1989:144). Community gatherings at seasonal festivals or other special occasions are marked by hospitality. The festivals are ‘a powerful

tool for glueing the community together as well as the community with the ancestors and God' (Moila 2002:1). Prayer is made to the ancestors for rain and thanked afterwards. During planting, growth and harvest of crops, libations, prayers and offerings are given to the ancestors. Times of hunting and fishing are usually occasions when offerings and prayers are presented to the ancestors. There are other special occasions when the ancestors are called upon. (Gehman 1989:144.) Some of the other special occasions are for 'installations to traditional offices ... even the office of a chief' (Pobee 1979:44-45).

### 2.3 Ancestors and daily life

The following quote shows that the ancestors feature in daily life:

As the elder members of the family, the ancestral spirits are shown signs of hospitality as a matter of course. Customary household rites include giving a pinch of snuff, a swallow of beer, a whiff of pipe smoke, a portion of spittle, a taste of food. Since the living-dead complain easily when ignored, their presence is continually acknowledged in every part of daily life. (Gehman 1989:143.)

### 2.4 Ancestors and the wellbeing of the member/clan/tribe

It was noted above that according to ATR all should go well, and that wellbeing in Africa is viewed holistically. Thus wellbeing is defined in terms of good health and strength, peaceful relationships between the living and the living-dead, prosperity, and protection from sorcerers and witches and their accomplices. Therefore 'Harmony within the individual and in the clan, society, nature and the spiritual world forms the basis of a healthy society' (Mndende 2006:170). Thus each household is 'expected to fulfil its role in keeping the relations between it, *Qamata* and the ancestral world harmonious' (Mtuzze 2003:106). When this harmony is disturbed it merely needs to be corrected through the guidance and help of the ancestors mediated through a diviner or witch-doctor or medicine practitioner and certain rites. Thus the means to maintain this harmony is very important in African societies. The ancestors' seniority to the living means they function as senior elders of the clan and guardians of the family traditions. Harmony with the ancestors is achieved by honouring and 'feeding' them and observing the traditions. (Gehman 1989:142-142; Maboea 2002:14.) Doing these things also has 'a therapeutic effect: they heal the individual and the clan, and also help preserve



unity in the community' (Mndende 2006:171). The ancestors are the key to attaining wellbeing. This explains the popularity of the ancestral cult.

Maboea (2002:14-15) captures well the results thought to follow from disregarding the ancestors:

... in spite of the genuine effort they [the living] put into their work, they suffer one setback after another and are unable to succeed at anything. They then feel disappointed, frustrated, helpless and psychologically troubled. Their families might become sick and some of them might even die ... [experience] a miscarriage ... endless problems, constant worry, sleeplessness, unfulfilled desires and happiness ... inability to save money, squandering wages, failure to profit in a business, and losing one's job and consequent unemployment ... family misunderstandings ... robbery, assault or even arrest by the police, being knocked down or run over by a car, and unpopularity ... hated by the community for no apparent reason ... struck dumb and become the butt of teasing and scorn ... become a drunkard or even a murderer.

The connection of the ancestors to wellbeing or lack of it in this life is the most powerful *raison d'être* for the ancestral cult. If the beliefs about the ancestors are correct, then the only logical response is to promote ancestral veneration with missionary zeal.

## 2.5 Ancestors and fear

The difficulty of knowing whether one has done enough to prevent the ancestors' displeasure and vengeance causes fear and anxiety (Gehman 1989:145); it seems, however, many would reject this claim (see below). Fear is accentuated by the ever present evil spirits, familiars, sorcerers and witches. Thorpe (1991:113) gives a more complete picture of the causes of fear: 'Among the fears that beset Africans are fear of evil spirits and malicious persons called witches or sorcerers, who use medicines to harm and destroy; fear of offending the ancestors; and fear of losing one's vital force.' 'For a great many people [in Africa], including some weak Christians, the fear of witches and witchcraft is the greatest single fear in their lives' (O'Donovan 1995:311). But even the witch-doctors are greatly feared 'for the power inherent in their office' (Thorpe 1991:116). Gehman (1989:136) states that in Africa 'Fear is a dominant feature.' 'Paganism is replete with fear of demons ...' (Unger 1981:112-113).

Gehman (1989:136) does recognize though that some Africans ‘though they believe in ancestral spirits, generally ignore them and surely do not fear them.’ Ancestors can also be held in affection by the living because of their kinship relationship to the ancestor (:139). In fact, the knowledge that their ancestors are with them is a source of comfort to the living (:142). But the positive images of caring ancestors do not cancel the fear – there is ‘a sort of dialectical tension’ (Nyamiti [Online]). The ancestors are not always predictable and are easily offended and have the power to blight (Gehman 1989:145). This accounts for the not uncommon situation where the ancestors are ‘scolded, rebuked, threatened and reprimanded’ (Gehman 1989:146; also Theron 1996:47). This response to the ancestors no doubt heightens fear because of the possible repercussions to such blatant disrespect. Thus the attitude towards the ancestors in Africa is ambivalent: they are loved and feared; the ‘living-dead are wanted and yet not wanted’ (Mbiti cited in Gehman 1989:145). This tension is strengthened by the knowledge that the ancestors are ever present. Gehman (1989:146-147) quotes a poem by Senegal’s poet, Birago Diop, which captures the emphasis on the constant living presence of the ancestors:

Listen more often to things rather than beings.  
Hear the fire’s voice,  
Hear the voice of water,  
In the wind hear the sobbing of the trees,  
It is our forefathers breathing.

The dead are not gone forever.  
They are in the paling shadows  
And in the darkening shadows.  
The dead are not beneath the ground,  
They are in the rustling tree,  
In the murmuring wood,  
In the still water,  
In the flowing water,  
In the lonely place, in the crowd;  
The dead are not dead.

The dead are not gone forever.  
They are in a woman’s breast,  
A child’s crying, a glowing ember.  
The dead are not beneath the earth,

They are in the flickering fire,  
In the weeping plant,  
The groaning rock,  
The wooded place, the home.  
The dead are not dead

## 2.6 Ancestors and tribal solidarity and land

In South Africa there are examples of groups wanting to be restored to their ancestral land. Clearly the belief in the ancestors has repercussions for understanding the value of and relationship to the land of one's birth and land of burial. Gehman (1989:141) notes that 'As elders, the ancestors serve as the owners of the land, fertilizing the earth and causing food to grow. The land becomes "sacred" in the sense that it binds together the living with their ancestors.' 'Wherever the realm of the living-dead may be, the ancestors are closely associated with the place of burial and with their former home' (:140). Jenkins (2008:179) writes that 'For indigenous people especially, threats to place often threaten a whole world, a lived cosmology. The burial place of one's ancestors is the logical or preferred locality to seek a close encounter with them, and hence staying in one's ancestral land is important.' Nürnberger (2007:39) also describes how the ancestral cult determines attitude to land and homestead: 'It is the structured space of the village, including the graves of the ancestors, that is one's 'home' and towards which one will always drift.'

## 2.7 Ancestors and morality/ethics

Seniority has great status and authority in African traditional societies (Theron 1996:4). The greater the seniority of ancestors the greater the authority of their traditions and customs. This authority, together with the ancestors' guardian role over the living (to bless or punish), and the importance of harmony in the extended community (including the ancestors), are the *three pillars* that provide motivation to maintain moral and ethical standards in traditional Africa (cf Mndende 2006:106 and Mtuze 2003:106). The traditions of the ancestors form an ethical basis for living (Moila 2002:38). The beliefs about the ancestors 'ensured that every able bodied person kept the social norms to the letter' and thereby the community maintained an ordered and stable society (Mtuze 2003:106). Traditional cultures, morals and values are thought to have their origin in God and revealed through the ancestors (Mndende 2006:162,164,165). The ancestors' guardian role can be trusted because they are seen as

‘perfectly moral, just, and never partial because of consanguinity (family relationships)’ (Setiloane 2000:32). The evangelicals battles to see why this belief is held if the ancestors are the same people they were on earth in a similar realm but just with more power. Evangelicals believe that ancestors while alive were sinners. Therefore they ‘cannot be anything else in death’ (Nürnberg 2007:14). Even if ancestors claimed this perfect integrity, there is still the question of their honesty or whether this claim came from a deceiving demon (see Chapter 4).

Most African people see God as the final guardian of law and order, and who punishes people or tribes who break the community unity through murder, cruelty, theft, disobedience of parents and the like. Though God is the ultimate upholder of the values, ethics and customs of the ancestors that give society unity and stability, it is the elders and living-dead who police the living to ensure ethical behaviour. (Mbiti 1969:207,209,213.)

The African view of moral evil is that it is any behaviour against the corporate body of the community or the spirits and living-dead, a breaching of the unity and harmony between members in the community or between humans and the spirit world. Sin is thus not against God but against the community which includes the ancestors (Niyironga 1997:61; Mbiti 1969:207.) All regulations ‘are on the man-to-man [sic] level, rather than the God-to-man [sic] plane of morality’ (Mbiti 1969:214); they are related to keeping the ancestors’ customs and traditions. In ATR, sin is ‘any act which does not contribute to the welfare and continuance of the family and detracts from the *sensus communis*’ (Pobee 1979:118). Sin disrupts the community (Williams 1992:12). Because ritual impurity and breaking of taboos and customs is thought to disturb ‘the harmony of the community and the peace of the spirits’, these sins are avoided (Niyironga 1997:62). The critical issue is not what God thinks of the individual, but ‘what the community thinks of the individual’ (:71). ‘In Akan society, the essence of sin is an anti-social act ... a factual contradiction of established social order’ (Pobee 1979:92,116).

## 2.8 The ancestors and time and development

The ancestors are the eldest of the senior elders. ‘Even as the youth look to the living elders for direction, so the whole living clan looks to their living-dead for guidance. ... the direction of the people is turned back to the traditions of the ancestors. ... *zamani* [past] is the focus of concern ...’ (Gehman 1989:141). Mbiti (cited in Williams 1992:16) states that Africans have

a past orientation (also Nürnberger 2007:39). Because of this focus, as noted in Chapter 1, ‘there is a reluctance to innovate and change direction’ (Gehman 1989:141). ‘There is no messianic hope, no concept of progress, no place for development ... The golden age ... is always in the past, never in the future’ (Miller 2001:265). ‘Lack of eschatology, this-worldliness and transcendence are clearly linked’ (Nyamiti cited in Williams 1992:16). This background focus is not conducive to development, especially as it prevents long term planning (Theron 1996:8). Ignoring the future has led to ‘a consequent loss of scientific and economic development’ (Williams 1992:11). Donovan (cited in Williams 1992:16) writes, ‘I doubt if it is possible for any pagan culture to take part in true human development.’ ‘Recourse to the medicine-man, ascribing ill-luck to the will of ancestors and spirits, or even of neighbours, belief that the world is inhabited by malevolent spirits – all these are hardly favourable to scientific progress, but result rather in cultural backwardness and resistance to change’ (Nyamiti 1987:59). Ngũbiah (cited in Hale 2007:57) speaking of the Kenyan situation, sees customs and mores [concerning the ancestors] as contributing no more than ‘the most marginal legitimate purpose in the rapidly modernizing world of post-colonial Kenya.’ Nürnberger (2004:88) wonders whether ‘the clash between traditionalist past orientation and modernist future orientation is a cause of growing economic discrepancies in the world today.’ If we argue that the ancestral cult has held back Africa’s development, and that colonialism and the economic success of the West have fanned hatred of Westerners, it can be understood why Africa ‘in crucifying the West, ... does not feel culpable, yet secretly, ... wishes that the crucified would resurrect itself to rebuild Africa!’ (Snyman 2008:107) – perhaps, more kindly, wishes the West to help all Africa to become first world (parts of South Africa are first world).

Another implication of the African beliefs about the ancestors, evil spirits, witches and sorcerers is to blame the ancestors and other spiritual powers for illness (like HIV/AIDS), career failure or unsuccessful efforts to generate or find work. Africans ‘believe that many of the causes of their current situation and the dominant influence in terms of their future lie in the unseen world of spirits, gods, and ancestors’ (Myers 1999:15). Africans fail to realize that their problems might be nothing more than ignorance due to a lack of training, business sense, poor planning and marketing, or laziness, or lack of drive and perseverance. This attitude of blaming unseen powers is clearly not going to contribute to development, which requires protecting and strengthening one’s health through proper diet and exercise and sleep, persevering through major setbacks, dogged perseverance and further training before success

is attained. 'Every culture has beliefs that disempower people, discourage change, and label oppressive relationships as sacrosanct and ordained' (Myers 1999:75).

The respect for the elders and ancestors also means the elders are not easily held to account. 'An older power always dominates the younger, who cannot directly affect the older' (Williams 1992:7). This leads to leaders getting away with inefficiency, lack of drive and vision and poor standards of work. Is this perhaps why in South Africa there is a major problem with middle and top levels of management, and why incompetent presidents in African countries have stayed in office despite their unsuitability, incompetence and lack of morals. The stress on unity also means that competition is frowned on and hence the popularity of some form of socialism. Needless to say this all has a negative effect on development.

Greenspan (2008:249,251) notes that capitalistic development is driven primarily by competition (and self-improvement, profit and private ownership). He uses the term 'creative destruction' to describe the role of this competition because it scraps 'old technologies and old ways of doing things for the new' (:268) in order to be more productive and thus it brings less stability and more stress and anxiety (:504) as one stands to be outdone by some new competitor and face a drastic drop in income or job loss. Capitalism thus disrupts social unity through competition and social division through the formation of a wealthy class. Capitalism is therefore a threat to African traditional societies that stress the traditions and unity and equality at all costs. This negative view of capitalism by ATR prevents the only economic system that has brought a significant rise in standards of living to the world from flourishing. In European cultures 'things and ideas tend to be given greater importance than people' (Smith 1984:23), whereas in ATR the reverse is true. But maintaining good relationships at any cost in order not to offend others and the ancestors supposedly to assure health and prosperity can have a negative impact on economic productivity.

Successful businessmen who have risen above their fellow community members are often victimized because it is thought they have upset the balance of power in achieving their success (Theron 1996:5) by drawing on more than their share of life-force or through witchcraft. As noted above, it is incumbent upon each person to help preserve balance and maintain harmony, even in such matters as the distribution of dynamic life force or spirit-force. For this reason it also happens that 'Technical improvements are refused for fear of the reaction of ancestors or the spirit world' (Myers 1999:86). Unless the whole community

progresses at roughly the same rate it is treated with suspicion. In a village in Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape, the owner of a spaza shop is the wealthiest person in the village, but has to be careful as 'such a life is noted and observed, often with envy. A person is not easily forgiven for exceeding meager expectations' (Steinberg 2008:35). This belief is presented in a different form by Smith (1984:21-22). According to the West 'there is unlimited good in the world' and there 'can be constant improvement, leading to a higher and higher standard of living' which is considered good and imitated (Smith 1984:21). But in African traditional beliefs 'there is only limited good in this world' (:22). This means someone or a group raising its standard of living by hard work and initiative is considered to have taken more than its fair share of good and thus has exploited the others who have less and prevented them from raising their standard of living (:22). Smith (:22) takes this as a reason why nations of the Southern hemisphere 'blame nations of the northern hemisphere for exploiting them': 'the very fact that the Northerner has so much and he has so little proves that the Northerners dipped too deeply into the pool of limited good.'

Will Africa then need to change its worldview before significant development can take place? Myers (1999) argues in the affirmative in his helpful book on development. 'Development by definition is about changing culture and changing culture is about changing values and worldviews. By denying the role of religion in development, Western governments are setting aside one of the most critical factors to the success of any development initiative [in Africa]' (Myers 1999:242-243). The worldview of a people 'does more to shape their development, their prosperity or poverty, than does their physical environment or other circumstances' (Miller 2001:34). Miller (2001) therefore argues for a change of worldview to effect development in Africa. He (:53-61) shows that 'there is no deterministic relationship between poverty and colonialism' (:60). What will it take to transform Africa's worldview? Parts of Chapters 4, 5 and 6 tackle this issue, but mostly from a biblical perspective. If converts are properly disciplined in Christianity, the ATR worldview can be appropriately changed and thus a major obstacle removed to progress and development in Africa.

It seems the ancestor cult is Africa's Achilles heel. It is not insignificant that the West's greatest scientific and economic development came after the ancestral cult died out. This is contrary to what would be expected, namely disasters, bad luck and poverty at the hands of neglected and disgruntled ancestors. Where have the ancestors of Westerners been during the

last century or so? Has the West not shown that the ancestral beliefs are best discarded and their foundation questionable? Chapters 4 and 6 will take up this question.

‘Anyone who fails to avail himself of these helps [in ATR, especially the ancestors] has himself to blame for any consequences’ (Imasogie 1983:66). If this were true the West would not be where it is today. It means that if one honours the ancestors all illness, misfortune, poverty and joblessness are *not* one’s fault. But it seems in Africa’s history, including the more recent, the traditions and customs have been followed – maybe not to the letter. Therefore the present state of Africa cannot be blamed on the ancestors according to ATR, but largely on the people of Africa. Perhaps it could be maintained that the amazing economic growth in Korea supports Imasogie’s claim. Korea has an ancestral cult, and so it could be claimed that its phenomenal economic development over the last thirty years resulted from its faithfulness to the ancestors. As noted above, in the light of the West’s economic growth in the absence of the ancestral cult, this can be challenged. This means the argument that Africa’s droughts and other critical problems and catastrophes stem from angry ancestors whose wrath has been aroused by a lack of commitment to the ancestral cult, especially through the AIDS pandemic where thousands are dying without the traditional burial rites, can be discounted. Rather, the real basis for Korea’s amazing development was Western technology and a strong commitment to modernizing the country through educational excellence and hard, hard work at school, university and in the people’s careers/jobs. But this might not be the only explanation. Prior to Korea’s passionate drive to modernize the country, it seems their traditions, culture and identity had not been undermined, maligned and weakened as much as in Africa. This observation will receive further attention in Chapter 5 as it is relevant to this study.

## 2.9 The cost of the ancestral cult

In the African traditional world, much money is paid for the services of the witch-doctor, for magic medicines, for charms for protection or to harm enemies, for sacrifices to the ancestors, and expensive funerals. This money can seldom be afforded and takes away much-needed capital for countering poverty and investment in development.

## 2.10 The extent of the traditional beliefs, especially about the ancestors, in Africa today



Some observers of Africa today believe that ATR is no longer alive, especially in the cities, and hence an in-depth acquaintance with ATR is unnecessary to the forming of a model of discipleship. Dr Michael Eaton, a pastor, preacher, teacher, scholar and author living in Kenya, takes this position which he communicated to the writer in a conversation with him. Gehman (1989:51) notes many modern influences on Africans that have undermined traditional values and relationships, but ‘Yet the past tradition continues to influence the present.’ Mtuze (2003:56) notes that ‘even after years of enlightenment, the belief in the existence of this spirit [Thikoloshe] still persists.’ Theron (1996:1-2) comes to a similar conclusion: ‘The traditional religion and world views of Africa are still playing an influential role in the life of Africans in spite of Westernization, modernization and acculturation.’ This is also evidenced in white suburbs in South Africa where middle-class Africans are now living: blacks ‘find it difficult to perform traditional rituals in their homes [in previously white areas] because of cultural differences’ (Ndabeni 2009:3). Official and private festivities celebrating African traditional activities are ‘now so much in fashion among the black elite [in South Africa]. ... they enjoy all the splendour and plumage of Western luxury but insistently argue for the acceptance of all traditional practices as a historical norm that must be maintained by all’ (Dikeni 2009:43). Farred (2009:80) notes Thabo Mbeki’s comments in his address to the Association of African Universities: ‘The challenge for an African university ... should be viewed as a call that insists that all critical and transformative educators in Africa embrace an indigenous African world-view and root their nation’s education programs in an indigenous socio-cultural and epistemological framework.’

Even in the lives of most African Christians the traditional world view is still functioning, although it may be unconscious in many cases (Mtuze 2003:59; Nyamiti [Online]; Maimela 1996:81,85-86). Some observers of African Christianity believe that the impact of Christianity on the majority of African Christians is rather superficial (Nürnberg 2007:40), evidenced in the syncretism in the African Church, an indication of the presence and resilience of ATR in Africa today. As Mndende (cited in Manley 2006:180) puts it, the ‘frequently belittled indigenous faith is ... very much alive and potently influences the lives of millions of people [speaking of South Africa], often coexisting quite happily with some form of Christian belief.’ Imasogie (1983:11,14) found in his parish work and then in his work with students studying for the Christian ministry, that ‘the average African Christian’s commitment to Christ is superficial ... evidenced by the fact that when he [sic] is faced with problems and uncertainties he often reverts to traditional religious practices’. ‘African

Christian leaders have complained that their congregations go to doctors (the modern story) and ask for prayers of healing (the Christian story), and, if these are not effective, consult traditional shamans (the African story) at night' (Myers 1999:221). In a survey of Christians during 1992 in Soshanguve near Pretoria, 1633 families were surveyed: 24.3% offered sacrifice; 95.5% offered to the ancestors; 27.8% offered to God and the ancestors; 42.5% venerated the ancestors; and 38% consulted diviners (Anderson 1992:132-133). Manley's (2006:178) knowledge of the Shona in Zimbabwe bears similar testimony to the Christians there: 'whereas my Zimbabwean respondents invariably indicated church allegiance of some kind, very few of them did not subscribe to and/or participate in traditional rites.' This trend among African Christians has continued 'In spite of the opposition by missionaries and many churches to the ancestor cult' (Theron 1996:45). Mbiti (1969:70) states that 'the 'cult' connected with the living-dead is deeply rooted in African life and thought.' Gwam (2006) tells of a mission African Enterprise conducted at Fort Hare University where they found the ancestral cult very much alive. If even Christians find it difficult to avoid syncretism, then the traditional beliefs must be deeply embedded in non-Christian Africans.

Steinberg (2008) writes about the current AIDS crisis and ARV treatment in a part of the old Transkei called the district of Lusikisiki. He (2008:26) speaks of a man, Sizwe Magadla (not his real name), with AIDS and the belief by the *whole village* that he had been bewitched. Steinberg was confronted with live Xhosa traditions, including the calling, training for and practice of the traditional diviner (*igqira*), the diviner-healer witch-doctor (*sangoma*), and the ancestral cult. In this up-to-date account of Steinberg's many visits to Lusikisiki, the reader is confronted with abundant evidence that African traditional beliefs are flourishing in this region.

Williams (1993:1) notes that independence and political development in Africa have brought 'a resurgence of traditional culture and religion.' The African Renaissance, which has been given a new impetus by Thabo Mbeki, proudly encourages the restoration of ATR and a healthy black self-image and identity after the dehumanization of suppressive colonialism (Nkesiga 2005:124; cf Hodgson cited in Mtuzi 2003:44) (see Chapter 6). Wiredu (cited in Teffo 1997:106) captures the spirit of this renaissance: 'Disentangling African frameworks of thought from colonial impositions ... is an urgent task facing African thinkers, especially philosophers, at this historical juncture. Clarifying African concepts should be high on the agenda of this kind of decolonization.' Setiloane (2000) elaborates on the negative effects of

colonialism which need to be eradicated: Africans ‘have been taught so much to internalize the images which the conquering cultures have bestowed on them, that they tend to despise themselves, and even their past, their present as well as their future’ (2000:9). Mtuzze (2003:92) speaks about the new positive attitude towards traditional healers. It is reported that South Africa’s previous president, Thabo Mbeki, traveled once a year to some area in the old Transkei for ancestral veneration. This could be in his capacity as the president of South Africa, and hence the veneration may be sacrifice and/or intercession to the ancestors on behalf of the amaXhosa or the entire nation. ‘The chief is the person who leads the customary sacrificial rites on behalf of the whole community’ (Mapoea 2002:41; also Theron 1996:13). Since Mbeki is the driving force behind the African Renaissance, this annual safari – if correct – would not be surprising.

Even African theology is ‘sending Black people back to their grassroots’ (Setiloane 2000:60). The Anglican Bishop of Grahamstown endorses Professor Mtuzze’s book (2003:v) which aims at defending a continuity and reconciliation between African culture and Christian faith and practice: ‘We are committed to encouraging “the true enculturation of the Christian Faith, in ways which *affirm people’s roots*, and which deepen people, in their rich diversity, in the life of the Gospel”’ (emphasis added). Mosothoane (cited in Theron 1996:38), an Anglican, ‘believes that the whole [ancestral] cult must be baptized, that is christianised.’

## 2.11 Summary and conclusion

The obvious conclusion from section 2 is captured by Nagada and Mofokeng (2001:24): ‘From birth to death our [African] lives are, and have always been, marked by customs related to the world of spirits.’ Every part of life has its ‘appropriate rites and ceremonies; they all require that all important spilling of blood [sacrifices to the ancestors]’ (Pato 2000:96). The rites of passage in the cycle of life not only emphasize the strong communal orientation in Africa, but also ‘revive the relationships ... between the living and the ancestors’ (Mndende 2006:167), which is so important for ‘the continuation of the ancestral line’ (Gehman 1989:143). These rites show the ancestors’ central role in the African’s journey through life. Especially in death, the reality and role of the ancestors looms large and overshadows all else. Similarly it was noted that the ceremonies around the cycle of seasons and other special occasions are impacted by the ancestral cult. It was also noted that all these many and regular important occasions are attended by every member of the community. This

regular public endorsement of the ancestral cult ensures it has a powerful hold on the African mind and psyche.

It has also been demonstrated that home-life, wellbeing, morality and ethics do not escape the influence of the ancestors. The aura of the ancestors thus extends beyond public festivals to every area of private life and all behaviour. Everything in life has to be reported to the ancestral spirits. Even the traditional land and homestead do not escape the all-pervading presence of the ancestors: the homestead on the ancestral land is the most important venue for sacrificing to and communicating with the ancestors. It has also been noted that the ancestral cult imposes fear (perhaps not always in the conscious mind) because of the sanctions that can so easily be unleashed by neglected, offended and disgruntled ancestors. To this situation must be added the fear aroused by the ever present hoard of evil spirits and their devotees. It would not seem an exaggeration to claim that African traditionalists are in continual bondage to their ancestors.

It has also been demonstrated that ATR is alive and growing in present-day Africa. The traditional rituals are not only practiced in rural areas, but also in townships and even in previously white suburbs. It cannot therefore be confidently said that traditional African religion will soon disappear before the relentless onslaught of the secular West.

Living in a world that so strongly intertwines the living and the dead is incomprehensible to Westerners. This is why Western missionaries – not all though – were so ineffective in the discipleship of African converts. Clearly Western evangelical leaders in Africa need to study the written material on ATR, especially by black writers, and engage in hundreds of hours of discussion with both Christian and non-Christian blacks. It would be the height of pride to do otherwise. The writer has noticed again and again that the black students he has taught have not thought deeply about the African worldview, and especially how knowledge of it should affect evangelism and discipleship.

This Chapter has highlighted the vital, urgent need to take the existential and cultural context of Africa into account when conducting Christian ministry to extend and consolidate the kingdom of God. It is inexcusable naivety and pride for Western evangelists to evangelize in Africa exactly as in the West and without a proper understanding of ATR. This kind of evangelism generally has superficial preaching, clever and emotional appeals leading to great

numbers of Africans responding out of politeness and respect, rather than because they understood the Gospel, were convicted of sin and desired to receive Christ for salvation. Then instead of thorough discipleship, the discipleship is short-lived or not at all. Sadly there are many evangelical African evangelists and pastors also guilty of these practices. This mindset has contributed to Christianity in Africa being superficially rooted in the Scriptures and African culture. There can be no doubt that the missionaries generally were ill-equipped to appreciate the significance of worldview and culture, and therefore failed dismally to really disciple converts within the African culture but without syncretism. This dissertation is an attempt to better grasp the relationship between Christ, culture and discipleship. This is partly why this study has started with a treatment of modernism, postmodernism, pluralism and ATR, as all have a bearing on discipleship in the African Evangelical Church. Chapters 5 and 6 will tackle this matter and seek solutions.

It needs to be said again that when traditional African views on the ancestors clash with Christianity, evangelicals are to use the Bible as their yardstick. Clearly Africans being reached by evangelicals would need to be firstly persuaded of the final authority of the Bible for life and faith (see Chapter 2) before they would be willing to reject those aspects of the ancestral cult incompatible with Christianity.

### **3. The source and credibility of claimed knowledge about the ancestors**

#### **3.1 Is there a need to test the truth of the ancestral cult?**

Is there a compelling reason for an endeavour to test African traditional religious beliefs and related claims concerning the spirit-world, especially the ancestors? For the development experts there would be a need if they hinder economic growth. For the African traditionalist the test would be superfluous and preposterous as the traditions are centuries old and because he/she 'respects and accepts African perception of reality' (Moila (2002:1); and because they have apparently served the people well. Further, 'The intellectual justification for the existence and on-going practice of *amasiko* [customs] is based on a simple logic, namely, that customs are customs (*amasiko ngamasiko*)' (Mbete 2006:25). For the evangelical the test is very important. This is because, as noted above, evangelicals have their reasons for accepting the Bible as authentic, accurate and the authoritative standard by which all religions,

including African traditional religion, must be evaluated. Thus the ancestral cult cannot be unconditionally embraced, especially as the Bible forbids contact with the dead (see Chapter 4). A pastorally wise approach that incorporates sensitive critique of ancestral beliefs needs to be developed by evangelicals. This will necessitate a thorough comparison of ATR and Christianity in the area of the spirit world. The next Chapter will take up this matter.

### 3.2 History testifies to a world-wide occurrence of the ancestral cult

African traditional religion had its origin long, long ago and has been passed on ‘by forebears by word of mouth’ (Mndende 2006:159) during succeeding generations. Mndende (:159) believes that African religion has ‘been there from the beginning’: God ‘gave the first generation all the laws and taboos concerning how to live in harmony with God, other human beings and nature’ (Mndende 2006:164). Setiloane (2000:46) concludes that ‘just as God was being revealed to the Hebrews of old as *Yahweh* ... so also He was being revealed to Africans as *Modimo, uThixo, Lesa*’. For this reason and the ones above, ATR is considered to be valid and true. It is difficult for non-questioning, non-critical, pre-scientific rural communities to critique, let alone break out of traditions so old and ingrained, especially as they appear to be logical, explain and help cope with reality as experienced and understood.

Communication ‘with the dead has been found in every continent from time immemorial’ (Gehman 1989:165; also Mtuzi 2003:59 and Nürnberger 2007:4). ‘Asian Christians are battling with ancestral beliefs as much as African Christians do’ (Nürnberger 2007:4). ATR beliefs and practices were once an integral part – ‘in principle, if not in detail’ – of the civilization of European ancestors (Hoernle cited in Mtuzi 2003:59). In fact, Nürnberger (2007:4) notes that ‘In Europe many beliefs concerning the deceased survive, especially in peasant communities.’ It is surely unfair and unkind to ignore this weight of historical evidence.

### 3.3 Reflection on the source of ancestral beliefs

There are no ancient oral traditions or authoritative writings in African traditional religions that describe how the traditions came about. Was this knowledge passed on to Africans from non-African tribes? Was it common knowledge from the beginning of the human race as Mndende suggests (see above)? Did the knowledge of the spirits and ancestors come from

them? Mndende (2006:159) answers affirmatively: Africans' religious beliefs and practices 'are believed to have been originated in the spiritual world.' Did Africans come to their conclusions based purely on their actual experiences of the spirit-world and deductions from them? Moila (2002:76) answers in the affirmative: '... African traditional religion ... was born out of the experience and deep reflection of African forebears.' A similar position is taken by Mbiti (cited in Mtuze 2003:54): 'we should remind ourselves that the belief in the existence of spirits provides people with the explanation of many mysteries which they find in the universe.' Were Africans' beliefs about the ancestors merely a mechanism to handle bereavement? Could their desire for (more) power (vital power or life-force) have led them to belief in powerful, benevolent ancestors? Probably all these possibilities, to some degree or other, contributed to the Africans' belief in the ancestors. It seems most likely that the ancestral cult and other beliefs about the spirit world were born out of the fact that the cosmos is not just physical matter, but has a non-physical dimension and is inhabited by spirit-beings. The static nature of this knowledge over many generations suggests it satisfactorily explains the Africans' experience of the invisible world. It provides a way to understand the world and cope with its challenges and mysteries. It is probably not far off the mark to say that beliefs about the unseen world were primarily subjectively, intuitively and inductively deduced. This would explain the minor differences between the African religions. In ATR there is no equivalent written book to the Christian Bible with its claim to divine inspiration and rooting in real history. This means that in Africa there is no ancient authoritative revelation of the spirit-world that can be analysed to ascertain the source of ATR. Therefore from an African traditional perspective it will never be known for sure whether the African beliefs involve any error or deception. The evangelical believes that the Scriptures not only account for Christianity's origin, integrity and authority, but is a tool to investigate the beginnings and integrity of ATR and any other religion.

Many in the West have sought to explain the African experience of spirits exclusively from a psychological perspective or brain chemical imbalance. In modern Western society spirit possession is often 'either dismissed as primitive superstition and charlatanism or, if credited at all, is looked at askance' (Mndende 2005:180). The rejection in the modern world of the spirit realm has backfired and given birth to an unprecedented interest in this area. In recent years angels, other non-human and powerful 'spirit-beings,' the occult and satanism have featured prominently in many films, books and articles and also in the New Age Movement. This interest in spiritual beings seems to indicate that the West has at long last come to

accept, probably largely through existential needs, the spirit-world. 'The escalating use of the term 'spirituality' is symptomatic of the experiential impoverishment [lack of the sense of the transcendent] of modern people' (du Toit 2006:50). This suggests that there is more to reality than just the physical, making the existence of a spirit realm more likely. This development makes Africa's story of the supernatural more believable. For the evangelical, since the Bible accepts the existence of spirit beings, they do exist. The similarities in the spirit world between ATR and Christianity are remarkable (see Chapter 4), which for the evangelical adds weight to ATR's views on the spirit realm.

### 3.4 Can modern science help with understanding the spirit realm?

The explanation of the origin of the 'hidden presences' (Mtuzze) is beyond the purview of modern science, which works with the visible and material (see Chapter 2). This is not to say that scientists cannot attempt research in this field. But if it did not take the Bible as true, any research results would need to be based on inferences, probabilities and speculation. Further, science's negative attitude to the non-physical and metaphysical, noted in Chapter 2, would prejudice its research. Postmodern scientists at least take seriously the claim of objective and subjective evidence of spirit-beings and the Bible's account of them. Their research would be more likely to be valid. No scientist has seen an electron, neutron or proton; nevertheless their best explanation of matter is that they do exist. The writer believes that if certain phenomena cannot be explained through physical science, but can be reasonably accounted for by spirit beings, the latter should not be ruled out of court. In the next Chapter the answers given in the Bible will be investigated as they are authoritative for evangelicals. This does not mean evangelicals will ignore the beliefs of others, e.g. the traditionalists. But for the evangelical it does mean their beliefs will be tested against the relevant biblical revelation (see Chapter 4).

### 3.5 Visitations of ancestors

It would seem that many of the ways the ancestors are claimed to reveal themselves are hardly convincing evidence of communication with them. For instance, dreaming about a deceased relative surely does not necessarily imply that he/she is trying to communicate with one. The dream may have been precipitated by a longing to have the deceased back, for example during the anniversary of the deceased's death. Dreams often occur when some issue is strongly on one's mind or when there is some inner psychological disturbance due, for



example, to an abusive husband. Living in an African traditional community will mean one's subconscious mind is full of the beliefs about the ancestors and one's conscious mind would be frequently reminded of them. This, together with the fear of the ancestors, constitute fertile ground for dreams about the ancestors. This is not to deny that in some cases there might be an invisible power behind a dream.

It was noted above that there have been claims 'of visible visitations of ancestors during silent moments' (Maboea 2002:13). But who is say that these visitations are not the work of some spirit prankster impersonating an ancestor? (see Chapter 4). African traditional religions include a belief in evil spirits (demons) being able to disguise themselves as ancestors (Steinberg 2008:48). In this case it would not be the ancestor communicating with the living, but a deceiving demon. The dream of the historical Nongqawuse proved false (Mtuze 2003:31) (see above). If it is true that her prophecy was conditional and not all the conditions were carried out, this could explain its lack of fulfilment. But Elliott (1970:13-23) shows that the conditions were met by thousands of the amaXhosa. Those who failed to heed the prophecy were according to the prophecy to be destroyed. It is questionable whether ancestors would have had the power to fulfil the prophecy. This either suggests the ancestors are not always honest or that a deceiving demon/evil spirit impersonating an ancestor can communicate a false message. Clearly great care is needed in processing dreams and visions.

African traditionalists 'consider any visit by the ancestors as a token of fortune to the living' (Maboea 2002:14). Surely such a belief will predispose people to having dreams about an ancestor or a vision of an ancestor. This would be setting people up for massive disappointment and great costs (visits to the traditional doctor-diviner and animals for slaughter to ensure the ancestors' blessings).

It is believed that ancestors sometimes communicate their need of food or drink to their living relatives (Pauw 1994:119) (see above). It is hard to accept that spirits need food and drink. However, this giving of food and drink might represent veneration.

It appears then that the much claimed communication from or with ancestors can be better explained in other ways. In Chapter 4 the possibility of demonic deception is explored.

### 3.6 Evidence for the ancestral cult

For Africans, the positive results stemming from appeasing ancestors confirm the validity of the ancestral cult. Ancestors 'are deemed 'real' because their existential impact on the living is pervasive and decisive' (Nürnberg 2007:14). Maboea (2002:16) records an incident from Pauw's experiences to support this: A woman who was ill with a stiff neck was visited by her deceased mother. 'The ancestor (her mother) diagnosed the illness as black fever and instructed the woman to go and dig for medicine at the river. The woman did as she was instructed and was cured.' The literature on African traditional religions provides enough similar and even more spectacular healings and other miracles (see e.g. Maboea 2002:16-19). Surely this justifies belief in ancestors. Further, some ancestral visitations involve their enquiring about their actual living descendants and possessing knowledge of family friction and other problems (Maboea 2002:17). Surely this too proves the existence of ancestors. But again, what about the presence of evil spirits? How should they be reckoned with them in all this?

It has been stated above that the West's amazing technological and economic progress took place without any ancestral veneration, and the lack of such progress in Africa has occurred in spite and because of a pervasive ancestral cult. It would seem that this indicates the beliefs about the ancestors are wrong. Nürnberg (2007:15) makes some perceptive comments: 'Those who do not believe in spirits [including ancestral spirits] are not guided by them or pestered by them either. Ancestors lose their relevance when they are forgotten.' This would suggest that Africa can safely discard the cult of the ancestors. The evidence for ancestors is mixed. Chapter 4 seeks to present a biblical explanation for both positive and negative evidences. If the ancestral cult is entirely or partly Satanic deception, this would explain Nürnberg's observations when the cult is discontinued.

### 3.7 Is the 'core of Africanness' paralleled by the Bible?

All Christians use the Bible as the basis for their Christianity. However, their interpretations of the Bible differ considerably, leading to varied beliefs about and expressions of the Christian faith. The core of Africanness parallels the Bible; and the many variations of African traditional religion parallel the different interpretations of the Bible. The only difference is that ATRs have not produced 'sacred texts' (Mndende 2006:163). For the evangelical, this 'core of Africanness', whether from natural or special revelation as claimed

by some Africans, has to be measured by the Bible since it is the evangelical's final religious authority.

#### **4. Conclusion and implications**

It has been shown that the African worldview, especially the traditions about the ancestors and other spirit-beings and deities, extensively impacts the lives of Africans – they 'govern the African people's existence' (Mtuze 2003:7). Mtuze (:7) says 'they also give meaning' to the African's life. Mndende (2006:160) states that African religion contributes to the African's identity: Myth [stories to explain the invisible through the visible] is the symbol that feeds our sense of identity' (Mtuze 2003:7). To tamper, or worse still to remove the ancestral and other occultic traditions, would surely collapse the very framework of African society and identity with serious negative results. Mtuze (2003:5) captures this concern: 'By refusing to accept this philosophy, *on which the very lives of the new converts depended*, the early missionaries were instrumental in *creating instability in these societies because they removed the very foundations on which they stood*' (emphasis added). Their 'onslaught struck at the very core of the people's existence' (:9) (see Chapter 5). Those calling for an African Renaissance understand this.

So can an attempt to remove the ancestral cult and other beliefs and rites contrary to Christianity be justified? To attempt an answer to this question, firstly, the positive and negative effects of the African belief system, especially concerning the spirit world, need to be catalogued. Positively, ATR, especially in rural areas, has produced powerful social cohesion, a strong sense of belonging, strong family units, a limited but extremely effective moral base, continuity with previous generations, and a holistic view of life (see Chapter 4). Negatively, in both rural and urban contexts, ATR has proved largely ineffective in resisting Western culture, stifled economic and democratic development, and proved unable to prevent moral and social decay outside of traditional, closed rural communities (see Chapter's 4, 5 and 6). There can be no return to the simplicity and innocence of the isolated, homogeneous, closed, self-supporting traditional societies. The African Renaissance cannot turn back the clock. In any case this renaissance involves integrating, especially economically, with the rest of the world. Serious thought, therefore, needs to be devoted to the question posed at the

beginning of this paragraph. Chapter 5 takes up the question which is related to the relationship of culture to identity and Christianity.

It does not seem too harsh to say that certain African traditional religious beliefs, especially about the spirit world, have been found wanting and need overhauling or possibly even replacement by a better religious-cultural system. But by what? Western secular values and goals are generally not an improvement on what ATR has to offer. Western culture has failed to take a holistic view of the universe, and has reduced it to matter, chance, meaninglessness, fragmented life, and glorified materialism and individualism to idolatrous levels (see Chapter 2). Is the Christian Faith not the answer? It shares a similar worldview, values and ethics with ATR. Further, Christianity is more conducive to innovation, planning, development and morals based primarily on an inner moral dynamic rather than a cultural system that loses its hold under the influence of other cultures, especially the more powerful ones. In Nkesiga's (1995) study of African leadership throughout the continent, he notes that some leaders like Thabo Mbeki 'are weary of moral leadership failure in their ranks' (:125). Christianity's morals and ethics are the answer to corrupt African leaders. Christianity can also accommodate democracy, which is so necessary in African states with more than one tribe. Democracy also can accommodate capitalism and they lead to better standards, productivity and delivery. Christianity also facilitates strong family life and a good work ethic so lacking in Africa (see Chapter 6).

But has not Christianity been tried in Africa and failed to make any difference? The Mbeki South African Government believed this, especially in the economic field. This can be seen in the number of theological, biblical and religious study faculties that have had to close because of a lack of government funding, e.g. at the Nelson Mandela Metropole University and Rhodes University. Where Christianity has made little or no positive difference in Africa, it is the firm conviction of evangelicals that the blame is failure in discipleship of converts rather than Christianity. If this could be corrected the Church would be a deeply purifying spiritual leaven in society and help Africa achieve 'a better life for all' (to use Thabo Mbeki's favourite slogan). This dissertation is the writer's small attempt to help get closer to this goal.

Africa's traditions are alive and well. This is the reality evangelical Christians must face in the African continent. It cannot be denied or ignored. This dissertation is an attempt to take this challenge seriously and aid the Evangelical Church in Africa to live to see the day when

Christianity flowers, displaying all its inherent beauty, and sanctifying, liberating and healing power, restoring human dignity and self-worth and promoting spiritual, social and economic development. It is time for the current Western missionaries and church leaders working in Africa to sincerely acknowledge the mistakes of the early missionaries (and no doubt many later missionaries and even themselves) and show what Christianity can achieve if the following can be realized: if Christianity is allowed to root itself in the African culture, rebuild African identity and self-esteem, build converts to spiritual maturity, transform the African worldview to a biblical worldview, purge and enrich African culture and humanity, and promote kingdom values in society and development so that poverty can be more effectively tackled and dehumanizing conditions eradicated. Between Chapters 4, 5 and 6 these themes are pursued and their relevance to discipleship of African converts is demonstrated.

## **A comparison of key Christian doctrines with parallel ATR beliefs**

The biblical worldview covers the source, nature, preservation and destiny of all reality – all life (including spirit beings) and inanimate things. ATR's worldview is equally all-embracing. The worldview of the Scriptures 'is sufficiently close to ATR that we can understand and accept the realities as expressed by followers of ATR' (Gehman 1989:107). This has led to a 'deluge of scholars and their writings ... stress[ing] continuity [between Christianity and ATR]' (Gehman 1989:246). This makes the case for ATR being as authoritative as the Bible more plausible. It also explains why syncretism is widespread in the Church in Africa. It has been noted repeatedly that syncretism is not an option for evangelicals because of their belief that the Bible is final revelation with salvation through Christ as the only way of salvation. This requires that ATR cannot be unconditionally embraced. However, it does mean that evangelicals need to ascertain just how Africanized Christianity can be without compromising the faith (see also Chapters 5 and 6). Tutu (cited in Williams 1992:1) emphasizes this process: the 'process of Africanizing Christianity can only be done ... if both traditional religion and the doctrine of the Christian Churches are examined carefully and systematically and the areas of agreement and conflict are defined and demarcated.' Pobee (1987:29) similarly writes that African theologians 'need to analyse African religions, approaching them in an unbiased and descriptive way ... [and] confronting these two traditions [ATRs and Christianity], and ... drawing out both their similarities and their divergencies.' There can be no doubt that a genuine dialogue needs to be conducted between 'the Christian faith and African cultures' (:34). This exercise is clearly essential for evangelicals as it must be the starting point for the development of a relevant and effective discipleship programme for the African Church. This Chapter takes up the challenge of Tutu and Pobee with the discipleship of evangelical African Christians in mind.

It has been noted above that evangelicals approach the continuity-discontinuity question in the light of what theologians call general/natural and special revelation, and the impact of the Fall on the former (see below). Evangelicals take the Bible as special, complete revelation, the yardstick for all other religions. This research does not take up the matter of the interpretation

of the Bible. It is common knowledge that Christians don't interpret the Bible the same. One's interpretation therefore will determine how much continuity and discontinuity one finds between ATR and Christianity. Since this study is concerned with the evangelical interpretation of Scripture, it will compare ATR with evangelical Christian teaching. Chapter 2 briefly spelt out the basic hermeneutical approach of the evangelical which is guided by the plot-line of the Bible.

Chapter 3 presented an overall view of ATR which was necessary for a thorough comparison of ATR and Christianity. This Chapter contrasts central Christian doctrines and the equivalent areas in ATR. These Christian doctrines are also the most relevant to the challenges evangelism and pastoral ministry face in the African context. The results of this Chapter are crucial for evangelicals to ascertain the permissible extent of inculturation of Christianity in ATR, and therefore highly pertinent to the matter of discipleship of African converts, the focus of this research. The Christian doctrines considered are: God, the kingdom of Satan, the human race, the person and work of Christ, discipleship and the deceased/ancestors. The latter two doctrines get more attention because of their greater relevance to the dissertation. Christian doctrines are well known in scholarly theological circles. However, to facilitate the comparison between ATR and Christianity summary material on the Christian doctrines is presented. The writer felt this was necessary as the Chapter lays the foundation for and is the heart of the dissertation.

## **1. The Doctrine of God**

### **1.1 Creator**

#### **1.1.1 The Biblical Doctrine**

From Genesis to Revelation the creation of the universe, including all life, from non-existence is attributed to God (Milne 1998:90) and implies 'God's authority over the world' (McGrath 2007:227). The implications of this is that humans are to be awed by the creation and its creator, thankful to him for it, seek a relationship with him, trust him, serve him and obey him (Carson 2008:46; Milne 1998:95).

### 1.1.2 Comparison with ATR

It has been noted above that ATR also has a belief in God/Supreme Being as Creator. However, this belief lacks a close, daily communion with him and accountability to him as in Christianity. In ATR there is far more contact with the ancestors, evil spirits, life-force, and traditional healers and diviners than there is with God.

## 1.2 The Immanence, Omnipotence and Providence of God

### 1.2.1 The Biblical Doctrine

God's omnipresence/immanence and omnipotence makes possible his providence. His providence is supremely focused on the Church. His providence is responsible for Christian faith, for empowering and preserving the Christians, and the guarantee of their eternal salvation (Milne 1998:83,92,101,102). These three attributes of God ensure all his plans for the world are carried out. His immanence means that though he is 'Holy Mystery, is wholly "other" ' he is 'yet nearer to us than our own breath' (Rakoczy 2000:78). An immanent, omnipotent and involved God has pastoral significance for Christians, especially in times of suffering and testing.

### 1.2.2 Comparison with ATR

In ATR, as in Christianity, God exercises providential care (e.g. sends rain, makes crops grow and sends judgement when necessary). However, in ATR this is largely through the deities and ancestors, who appear autonomous. God's providence, or lack of it, in ATR, unlike in Christianity, can be viewed negatively because the people are 'inescapably at the whim of the forces of the universe' (Craffert 1999b:37). Another major difference between ATR and Christianity is that because of God's immanence in Christianity Christians are never taught to approach or manipulate deities, spirits or ancestors for their needs, good or revenge on others. Instead, they are always to look directly to God for protection, aid, comfort, deliverance, healing, guidance, provision, and judgement of enemies. 'It is thus the result of a misconception of the God of the Bible that the worship of ancestors is taking place. Such worship leads to the true God of the Bible not being worshipped or adequately worshipped. A



man-made system has been developed to fit a distorted view of God' (Stoltz 2006:7). Stoltz would thus view the ancestral cult as resulting from a misreading of natural revelation.

In ATR God is viewed as being everywhere, partly through vital-force present in everything. Further, the world and all in it are 'concrete manifestation[s] of His being and His presence' (Mbiti 1969:55). 'The validity of the reality of this [divine] presence did not depend on the extent to which it was conceptualized. It was as one participated in life that one apprehended God's presence' (Parratt 1987:96). Clearly in ATR God seems to lack personal attributes, e.g. love and holiness, and here ATR looks like pantheism. In contrast, the Bible's God confronts humans as a divine person, who is distinct from his creation. Evangelicals would say that creation and human experience of life, however, are proof that God exists, but not manifestations of his Being. He is a far more approachable, caring, and involved God than in ATR. He works directly with his creation. He is a hands-on God. In ATR, however, God works and communicates mostly through the ancestors. In Christianity, though God does not delegate his providential power to the ancestors or other spirits, he sometimes uses spirit beings in his service. In ATR God is terribly awesome, totally mysterious and unknowable. It is then no wonder that God's immanence and presence are not known and experienced as in Christianity. It is possible to see ATR as preparing the way for a true, fuller knowledge of God and the greatest and most powerful 'ancestor,' who is both human and divine, who continually prays and pleads his merits on the Christian's behalf to God and opens the way into God's presence. All this would render the ancestors redundant. This matter is taken up later in this Chapter and Chapter 6.

The evangelical believes that in ATR the attributes of God's immanence, omnipotence and providence are compromised. This is because the ancestors, traditional diviners and healers are given a far too prominent place. For the evangelical this means God is impotent and disinterested in his people. The writer appreciates that access to God through the ancestors in traditional Africa is a sign of respect for God (Thorpe cited in Mtuze 2003:49). The Christian can learn from this, and endeavour to avoid showing God less respect than he deserves. Traditional Africans should be made aware that in Christianity the supplicant does not confront God's full glory – at least not in this life.

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Security from metaphysical forces ranged against the Christian is experienced by looking not to the ancestors but to a Father-God, his victorious, exalted, universally reigning Son and his

omnipresent Spirit. The approach of Christianity when God does not change a problem situation is as follows: repentance from known sin, faithfulness to God according to the Scriptures, prayer, and persistent faith in God's sovereign power and loving providence. When the African traditionalist has tried all avenues for a solution to illness and suffering without success, it appears there is a fatalistic resignation to his/her predicament – 'Heaven (God) has forsaken me'; the sufferings 'are approved of God'; they are 'God's will' (Mbiti 1969:43-44). In contrast, in Christianity God works through the crisis or sickness for one's good. 'Because Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth, he can make good come from even the most wicked plans of men or of fallen angels' (O'Donovan 1995:59). MacArthur (2002:25-31) gives a number of biblical examples to illustrate how God can bring good out of Satan's adversity. He (:31-40) also presents a number of examples where God uses Satan as his instrument of judgement, but also with good resulting. The Apostle Paul actually welcomed suffering rather than stoically enduring it because 'suffering is not some defect in God's way of salvation – it is part of the saving process itself. ... It is the inevitable consequence of the life of the Spirit having to express itself through the body of death' (Dunn cited in Kourie 2000:17). Boleleale (cited in Williams 1992:5) notes that in Africa God is never called by the name 'Father.' For the Christian, therefore, the doctrines of God's immanence, omnipotence, providence and fatherhood are most comforting and 'call for an attitude of utter confidence in the midst of all the 'impossibilities' of human history and personal circumstances' (Milne 1998:84).

### 1.3 The Transcendence of God

#### 1.3.1 The Biblical Doctrine

The Bible presents God as transcendent in his being – in his glory, holiness, righteousness, power and majesty. His transcendence means there is a need for a system of intermediaries to connect finite, fallen creatures to him. In the Bible this problem is solved by atonement through the Lord Jesus Christ (in type in the Old Testament sacrificial system and then in anti-type in Christ's death, resurrection and ascension) and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Jesus qualified as the perfect man-God mediator/'ancestor,' the progenitor/father of the new humanity, who is the most powerful and greatest of all ancestors. Through the incarnation and imparted, resident Holy Spirit the transcendence of God is no longer a barrier to communion between the Christian and God.

### 1.3.2 Comparison with ATR

Nürnberger (2007:41) gives the results of Comaroff's research among all kinds of Christians in a Tswana subgroup. The question "Is God far?" was answered positively by 96% of the people. Kibongi (cited in Williams 1992:3) believes that in ATR God's transcendence is due to a sense of unworthiness to approach him. Williams (1992:3) notes that in Christian terms this would be due to sin which causes a separation between man and God. He also states that because ATR does not have an atonement for sin, it 'leads to the separation between man and God becoming more permanent' (:3), which in turn leads to the view that he 'does not relate to the ordinary life of men [sic]' (:2). Because in ATR this gulf is not strictly-speaking related to humans' sinful nature and sins against God, it is not solved by the process of atonement. Rather, it is handled through intermediaries, especially the ancestors, who are considered qualified for this role. The problem here is that the ancestors are sinful humans and therefore unworthy of this role. In consequence, it is difficult for evangelicals to accept that the ancestors have access to God.

The God of the Bible, unlike in ATR, 'has never withdrawn from his people or from the world. In fact, the very plan of salvation through Christ is more than enough proof of a loving God that has worked directly in the world since the Fall' (Stoltz 2006:7). The problem of God's transcendence, of his separateness, is rightfully recognized in ATR and solved in Christianity.

## 1.4 God as Saviour

### 1.4.1 The Biblical Doctrine

The biblical story portrays a God who saves. The New Testament shifts the focus from deliverance from temporal needs and imminent dangers, e.g. enemies, evil spirits, sicknesses, persecution, and material needs, to the deliverance from the guilt of sin and God's wrath aroused by sin (König 2004:146). The real dangers that loom large in the New Testament are the sinful nature, the kingdom of Satan, enemies of the faith, the law (as a way of salvation), death and God's wrath. So in the New Testament salvation no longer means 'this-worldly prosperity, but rescue from the wrath of God in the last judgment' (Nürnberger 2007:73).

Though the fruit of biblical salvation now is spiritual rather than material, it can include the latter as well; but its ultimate fruits are both spiritual and material, i.e. salvation is comprehensive/holistic (cf the new heavens and earth). Salvation stems from election (in Reformed understanding), hearing and being called by the Gospel. It is received through repentance and faith, and involves new birth (prior to and making possible and certain repentance and faith in Reformed understanding), forgiveness, justification, adoption, sanctification and the redemption of the body and the world. The eschatological dimension of Christian salvation is captured by Slimbach (2001 [Online]):

a new world order ... where all relationships are restored and energized by the divine presence; where nothing threatens the weakest segments of society (particularly children and the elderly); where the basic needs – and more! – required for life are provided for all; where freedom from every kind of servitude and oppression is safeguarded; where the ultimate affections of both the poor and the powerful are changed; and where the beauty and harmony of the material universe – from the tiniest particle to the farthest galaxy – have been restored as an essential display of the greatness and goodness of God.

Whether from an Arminian or Reformed perspective, salvation is all of God (cf Nyirongo 1997:77). It is even the grace of God that ‘enables us to respond to the challenges of the gospel’ (Nolan 1995:77). Salvation ‘humbles human pride (for it is God’s doing, not ours)’ (Preskett and Ramachandra 2003:73).

Because God’s complete salvation embraces ‘The whole of nature as well as each personal and social dimension of life’, Christians, although they ‘cannot effect this total transformation,’ are to commit themselves ‘to this goal ... until God finally establishes the Kingdom spoken of in the Bible’ (Kretzschmar 1995a:2).

#### 1.4.2 Comparison with ATR

ATR lacks a clear doctrine of sin against the revealed standards of a holy God. ‘The measure of right and wrong are the dictates of society and its traditions’ (Gehman 1989:256). The people ‘are more concerned about acceptance by their people than they are about acceptance by God’ (O’Donovan 1995:99). ATR does not see death as God’s punishment for sin against his law and there is no punishment after death. ‘There is nothing awaiting them [Africans] when they die, for sin is chiefly an offence against one’s neighbour, and is punishable here

and now' (Gehman 1989:255; also Williams 1992:16 and Parratt 1987:76). 'Because sin is communal disruption it is automatically expiated by death ...' (Williams 1992:10). The idea of heaven and hell as 'two abodes that are dependent upon an individual's moral behaviour in this life' is foreign to ATR (Burnett 2000:72). Pobee (1979:104) states that the Akans believe that the life-soul 'returns to God to render account of himself to his King, God.' But this does not equate with the Christian doctrine of the great assize and eternal punishment or eternal reward.

Salvation in ATR includes the following: 'acceptance by the clan, protection from evil powers and the possession of life force' (O'Donovan 1995:99); deliverance 'from physical dilemmas' like 'death, drought, floods, sickness or any epidemic' (Parratt 1987:72); 'life-sustaining gifts of God', which include 'food, children, health, protection' (:100); and 'a bountiful life with health, wealth and prestige' (Gehman 1989:255). Salvation in ATR is thus focused on wholeness of life in this age, unlike in Christianity with its eschatology. It can be seen that Africa's view of wholeness and well-being was an *evangelico preparatia* for understanding Christian salvation, especially the new body, heavens and earth (Mugabe 1995b:11). Another similarity between ATR and Christianity is living life to the fullest in power (life-force/Holy Spirit) and harmony with God and the community (clan/church).

The African concept of salvation is not fully exhausted in this life. Becoming an ancestor is another dimension of salvation (Nyirongo 1997:72-73; Dovlo cited in Mugabe 1995b:18). 'Paradise, according to African thought, is not somewhere in the sky, it is in the underworld of the ancestors – *Kwabaphantsi*' (Ndungani 1996:78). Only a few dead fail to become ancestors, e.g. witches (see Chapter 3). Nyirongo (1997:72) states that once ancestors are no longer remembered they cease to exist, or as noted in Chapter 3, their existence decreases or degenerates and the final end is unknown. Further, the ancestor moves back in time rather than forward to something far greater than that experienced in the past. The intermediate state in Christianity is similar to the state of the ancestors (see below). However, in Christianity the intermediate state does not end in some kind of non-existence, but moves on to a higher, never-ending level of existence in the new earth in a resurrection body freed from sin, decay/corruption, weakness and dishonour, and reflecting the full image of Christ (1 Cor 15:42,43; Phi 3:21). This does not surprise the evangelical in the light of the superiority and finality of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant, and by extension over all other religions, including ATR. It can be stated that since life in the new world is an extension and

enrichment of life in this world, it can be seen as the fulfilment of the longings in ATR for never-ending, abundant, powerful, harmonious life. The new earth also brings community in ATR to a greater height as community will be perfected and never broken there. Randy Alcorn (2005) provides the most extensive and convincing treatment from an evangelical perspective of life continuing essentially as known on earth in the intermediate state and the eschatological world (heaven on earth). It debunks the average evangelical belief that life after death (intermediate state and after the resurrection) will be unrelated to life on this earth. With this understanding messianic-eschatological prophecies in the Old Testament can be seen to provide some idea of not a millennium, but the new earth with the heavenly Jerusalem featuring as a kind of capital city of the world where the focus and leadership of worship, government and prosperity are situated.

### 1.5 Conclusion

It has been shown that there are similarities and dissimilarities between ATR and Christianity in the areas of God's omnipotence, immanence, transcendence and salvation. The similarities, with the Christian portrayal enlarging and improving on that in ATR, have led some African theologians to view traditional African's beliefs about God and salvation as an *evangelico preparatia*. This position sees Christianity as the extension, fulfilment and consummation of salvation in ATR. Pobee (1987:52) takes this view with a proviso: 'Christianity should be seen as fulfilling the highest and best in the spiritual and religious aspirations of the black, and yet stand in judgement on all that diminishes him and makes him less than what God intended him to be.' Ntetem (1987:104) sees the positive religious values in ATR as coming from the same source as Christianity and looking forward to the refinement of their distorted human elements and their completion in the Christian religion. However, Chapter 4 of this dissertation shows that the differences are significant, and therefore the evangelical cannot unconditionally accept everything in ATR as preparatory for Christianity. If the biblical doctrine of sin, eternal punishment and eternal salvation is correct, it must be proclaimed to African traditionalists and every other human. To attempt less would for the evangelical be the greatest and most heartless sin against humankind.

## **2. The Kingdom of Satan**

## 2.1 The Biblical Doctrine

### 2.1.1. Background

It has been stated in Chapter 2 that any unbiased reading of the behaviour of the human race through its long history must lead to the conclusion that there is a serious flaw in the human heart and an alien enemy in the camp. Sanders (1975:19-20) asks the question: 'Is it inconceivable that behind the forces of human history there is a kingdom of evil?' Evangelical Christians do not attribute the disturbing moral landscape to non-moral principles of time, chance, natural selection and the survival of the fittest. This is because they believe such a view cannot satisfactorily explain the universal moral nature of humankind and the atrocities committed. The writer believes that Christianity offers the most plausible explanation of destructive evil in the world: the human race has an inherited sinful nature and there is a kingdom of evil spirits under Satan's dominion operating throughout the whole world. Because of the prominence of certain spirit beings as sources of evil in ATR and Christianity, this matter is now taken up.

### 2.1.2 Satan is the source of evil in the world

Satan is a spiritual being who is the source as well as the master promoter of all evil. He is against God, sinless angels (see below) and the human race (Sanders 1975:63). Examples of his power to destroy health, life and property are seen in Job 1:15-17,19 and 2:7. Sanders (:24-35) discusses the many names given to Satan to unfold his evil character: Satan, devil, Beelzebub, the Serpent, murderer, roaring lion, liar, tempter, dragon, the evil one, accuser of the Christians, the prince of this world, the 'ape' (impersonator) of God, the god of this world, and the prince of the power of the air. Satan would utterly destroy the human race if God permitted him the opportunity; he 'can do nothing without God's permission' (Smith nd:3). He is the 'the head of the forces of evil' (Milne 1998:99). This makes 'his presence and power practically ubiquitous' (Unger 1981:147). He is thus a king ruling a worldwide kingdom, a rival kingdom of God's kingdom. His kingdom 'wages war against God and man [sic]' (Smith nd:4). 'He is the general of an army who spends most of his time at his headquarters. His works are carried out by his lieutenants and foot soldiers, his army of demons' (:4) (see below). 'Satan's demonic kingdom is highly organized with each demon having a clearly defined task or role in the organization' (:4). The Bible states that non-Christians are in

Satan's kingdom and Christians are in Christ's kingdom, though not free from the attacks of Satan. Unbelievers, especially humanists, find this a very difficult pill to swallow (see below). In the modern world belief in the Devil and demons is generally considered superstition and hence the biblical presentation is viewed as a fairy tale or folklore (Sanders 1975:9-10; Unger 1981:7). However, in Chapter 2 it was noted that there has been a recent growing interest in spiritual beings in the last twenty years or so (cf Milne 1998:99).

Evangelicals believe that the Bible teaches that Satan's kingdom (see below) is behind the secular ideologies that dominate societies, especially their institutions, economics, politics, and governments (Milne 1998:100; Sanders 1975:60) (cf Satan as the God of this world). The forces of darkness can also 'be recognized in religious deception, in the worldwide increase in crime (especially murder) and sexual immorality, in the cruelty and terrorism of some governments, in the power of witches and sorcerers, in the opposition that Christians experience doing the Lord's work, and in many other kinds of evil in the world' (O'Donovan 1995:199). Christians, therefore, are to come out of the sinful world, not literally, and hate its anti-God and sinful ethos (see Chapters 5 and 6 for the implications of this for the Christian African). Because the kingdom of Satan is behind all the evil in the world, evangelicals are adamant that more sophisticated technology, better education, job opportunities for all, removal of poverty, pluralism, and a change in government cannot on their own provide effective and lasting solutions to the problems of evil in society.

A major goal of the pervasive kingdom of Satan is the spreading of religious deception. He blinds people to the truth (2 Cor 4:4). His success here is captured in Revelation 12:9: '... Satan, who leads the whole world astray.' This is because of Satan's hatred of God and his desire to turn human beings against God and claim their allegiance and worship; and because Satan 'the archenemy is an archdeceiver' (Carson 1984:113). Satan chooses wily strategies to promote his agenda. It is no wonder that the Bible is against dabbling in witchcraft and interacting with spirits, including departed or ancestral spirits (see below), as the door is then opened to Satan's powerful deceptive capacity. 'Unless we understand this [that Satan is an archdeceiver], we will be pathetically gullible, sucked into various sins and blown this way and that in our doctrine' (:113). The Bible rejects idolatry because it sees satanic (demonic) power behind it (1 Cor 10:19-20). So this means idolaters direct their worship to Satan and his powerful demons, though often unknowingly (Sanders 1975:78). When Israel committed



idolatry it was an abomination to God because ‘They sacrificed to demons who were not God’ (Deut 32:15-17).

The Bible explains that because of Satan’s kingdom the history of the human race is a story of moving away from an original unpolluted knowledge of God and moral standards into ungodliness, unrighteousness, spiritism, polytheism, idolatry, magic/occultism and atheism (Unger 1981:148-149; 150-152).

### 2.1.3 Angels and demons/evil spirits

There are numerous angels who are spiritual creatures created by God (Milne 1998:98). O’Donovan (1996:187-191) finds hints in Ezekiel 28:11-18 and Isaiah 14:12-14 for believing that Satan is an angel, who before the world was created led a rebellion of a group of angels against God’s supreme sovereignty (cf Sanders 1975:16-21 and MacArthur 2002:12-14). Their judgement was being cast out of heaven (2 Pet 2:4). ‘Once Satan and other rebel angels were cut off from the life and holiness of God, they became totally evil and corrupt’ (O’Donovan 1995:189). The other angels are ‘fully obedient to God, [and] have been given the task of caring for the people of God who live in this evil world (Psalm 103:20-21, Heb 1:14)’ (:192). ‘They are particularly connected with the ministry and mission of Jesus (Mt 1:20; 4:11; 28:2; Jn 20:12; Acts 1:10f.)’ (Milne 1998:99). They also ‘carry out the judgments of God against the world’ (Isa 37:36; Rev 16:8; etc) (O’Donovan 1995:180). Angels have great power. Both fallen angels and sinless angels are able to take on a physical form or appear in a vision or dream.

The Bible also teaches the existence of demons (*daimonia*) and evil spirits (*akatharta pneumata*). Demons are intelligent, powerful, evil spirit-beings, whose range of evil includes lies, deception, false doctrines, inflicting illnesses and physical harm, possession of people, and tempting humans to commit sins, like immorality (‘unclean spirits’ points to sexual sins; cf 1 Tim 4:1 and 2 Ki 23:13) and murder. ‘Just like human beings, demons have different intellectual, moral, and spiritual traits. These traits will manifest themselves accordingly through the possessed person. Some demons are refined, educated, cultured, and even appear to be “good” and benevolent, parading as elect angels, even as the Holy Spirit himself. Others are unrefined, uneducated, coarse, vile, and morally filthy’ (Unger 1981:107-108). Perhaps all demons display all these qualities, but not at the same time or degree (see below). Unger

(:108) also notes that all demons ‘display their essential God-defying and Christ-resisting trait’.

In the case of possession, the demons ‘seem to be able to come and go at will’ (Sanders 1975:65). Most psychologists deny demon possession, and interpret the symptoms within a psychological-materialistic framework (Sanders 1975:68).

Certain passages show that the terms ‘demon’ and ‘evil spirit’ refer to the same spiritual beings (Sanders 1975:62) (cp Mk 3:22 with 3:30; 5:2,8,13 with 5:12; 6:7 with 6:13; 7:25 with 7:26,29,30; Lk 4:33). If Luke 9:39 is compared with 9:42, and Luke 10:17 with 10:20, it can be seen that the word ‘spirit’ with no adjective is a synonym for ‘demon,’ which strongly suggests that *all* spirit-beings (excluding the spirits of the deceased, the Holy Spirit and unfallen angels) are demons/evil spirits. 1 John 4:1-6 seems on the surface to allow for good spirits. The believer is to test the spirits to see if they are of God (v1). Those who believe that the Son of God was incarnated as the Lord Jesus Christ are from God, which looks like we are dealing with good spirits (vv 2-3). The trouble with this interpretation is that the ‘good spirits’ appear to be identified with the Holy Spirit or with those, like the Apostle John, who have the correct belief about the incarnation (see below). It could be that the fallen angels are demons or that demons come from among the fallen angels (O’Donovan 1995:194-195). The possibility that demons are fallen angels is made more likely by the following: (i) the Bible does not describe the origin of demons, (ii) demons are powerful, intelligent spirit beings, and (iii) are absolutely evil. Demons, however, are not all equally wicked (Mt 12:45).

#### 2.1.4 Idolatry, divination, magic, witchcraft and sorcery

It was noted above that the Bible teaches that demonic power is behind idolatry (Dt 32:16-17; Ps 106:35-37; 1 Cor 10:14,20-22). Divination, fortune-telling, contacting the dead, and magic/witchcraft/sorcery, are to be avoided as they are detestable practices to God because (i) of a probable demonic connection, and (ii) they prevent looking to God alone for help, guidance and protection (Dt 18:9-13; 1 Sam 15:23; Acts 16:16-19; 19:19,23-27). The original sin was stimulated by a desire for knowledge and power like God’s (Gehman 1989:110). Divination and magic (black or white) reflect the first sin and are thus rebellion against God: divination not only reflects a lack of faith in God, but is also a hunger for illegitimate knowledge; and witchcraft is a desire for illegitimate power (Gehman 1989:110-111,113). With reference to

black and white magic, Burnett (2000:152) states that ‘it is not possible to exactly know what were the original forms of magic employed, but the use of so many terms [cf Deut 18:10-11] demonstrates the fact that all forms of magic were forbidden [in Israel].’ Unger (1981:140-141) argues that both forms of magic involve the compensation principle (Satan demands some sort of payment), have theological repercussions (rejection or insincere recognition of Christianity), and also result in the same psychic consequences. Satan and demons are capable of performing miracles in order to gain admiration, allegiance and worship (2 Thes 2:9; Rev 16:13-14; Mt 4:8-9; 1 Cor 12:2), so they would conceivably perform evil or good, beneficial miracles if it served their lust for a servile and devoted following. Satan in the garden of Eden is referred to as the serpent. It seems possible that the serpent could have been a manifestation of Satan in serpentine form. One cannot help at this point thinking about experiences among the amaXhosa of spirit incarnations in animal, human or sprite form.

#### 2.1.5 Defeating Satans’ kingdom

Satan and his kingdom of fallen angels/demons were dealt a fatal blow guaranteeing their eternal demise and judgement through Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension to the highest level of power. This means that Christ is more powerful than Satan’s kingdom. Christians are spiritually joined to Christ and positionally seated with him on his throne. This all means the believer in Christ need not fear demons – the spirit powers of darkness. ‘It is a known fact that in lands where the Gospel is preached and believed, the open activities of demons has been quieted’ (Gehman 1989:177). Smith (nd:19) notes that preaching the gospel and casting out demons lay at the heart of Jesus’ ministry (Acts 10:38) and that this ministry has been passed on to his disciples.

Sin and rebellion by people against God gives Satan power; hence confession of sin is important to overcome Satan and cast out demons (O’Donovan 1995:211) (cf Eph 4:26-27). Smith (nd:18) deduces from Colossians 2:15 and the context that when a Christian sins Satan and the demons are given leverage against him/her. The Christian’s weapons in the fight against Satan’s kingdom are – apart from repentance from sin and proclaiming the Gospel – truth, righteousness, Christian faith, salvation, the Word of God, prayer, and humility.

‘The devil is no match for Almighty God’ (Smith nd:4). Nyirongo (1997:34) can therefore remind Christians that ‘Satan’s power is limited and governed by God’s sovereign will.’

There is no dualism and Satan ultimately serves God's purposes (cf Job, Gn 50:20 and Acts 4:27-28). Carson (1984:150,153) notes this with reference to the Apostle Paul's thorn in the flesh: Paul 'sees this thorn as simultaneously the work of Satan and the work of God', and though 'there was nothing intrinsically good about it, ... it was "given" him (by God) for beneficent purposes.' 'Disease, accidents, oppression, opposition to the gospel' can all 'be traced in one way or another to Satan himself. ... Yet at the same time, none of these ugly things escapes the outermost bounds of God's sovereignty' (:152-153). 'God only lets him [Satan] do what He wants done' (Smith nd:3) (cf Lk 22:31-32). This knowledge of Satan coming under God's sovereignty is most comforting in the Christians' struggle with Satan's attacks.

## 2.2 Comparison with ATR

### 2.2.1 Satan

ATR has no doctrine of Satan (and his kingdom) as arch-enemy of God and humankind. Pobee (1979:115) notes that some evil forces in Akan traditions are viewed as manifestations of *Sasabonsem* or Satan, but here Satan's role is not as widespread as in the biblical presentation, especially with reference to deception. The most powerful evil spirit in ATR could be viewed as a kind of equivalent of Satan.

### 2.2.2 Evil spirits/demons

In both ATR and Christianity evil spirits/demons are acknowledged and experienced (Mtuze 2003:30). The Bible provides many examples of human encounters with evil spirits, including speech from them through the possessed's vocal organs, all of which are known in ATR. But the Bible goes further than ATR and gives us information on the (probable) origins, nature and the final destiny of evil spirits; and such knowledge must come from divine revelation since humans cannot enter the world of spirits and because communication from demons as to their identity would be unreliable.

### 2.2.3 Countering evil spirits/demons

Both the Bible and ATR show that evil spirits and their evil machinations can be effectively countered through qualified people. In Christianity every Christian potentially has the power to resist and cast out demons/evil spirits. But it is clear the leaders, like the original apostles, missionaries and pastors/elders, take the lead in exorcisms because of their further training and leadership status. A definite difference in the method of countering spirits can also be noted (see below). In ATR, amulets or medicines ‘charged’ with spirits (see below) or life-force (see below) are used. All primitive societies have their shamans. They were also part of the Greek-Roman world. In Christianity spiritual means, namely the Bible and belief and confession of Christ’s cross-work in the power of the Holy Spirit, are to be used to resist and defeat Satan and his kingdom. Jesus as *Christus Victor* ‘over the spiritual realm and particularly over evil forces’ is the answer ‘to the need for a powerful protector against these forces and powers’ (Bediako 1990:8).

#### 2.2.4 The power of witch-doctors

The question must be faced as to why Christianity does not permit Christians to use the services of witch-doctors and traditional medicine doctors to deal with curses and illnesses and other attacks from evil spirits.

##### 2.2.4.1 Witch-doctor successes

There is no doubt that witch-doctors are effective in combating evil spirit activity. In traditional societies there are exorcisms and other healings from illnesses caused by evil spirits (Burnett 2000:186-187). The very existence and popularity of witch-doctors testify to this as well as the testimonies of many Africans. The cause of syncretism in the African church must partly be sought in inadequate discipleship in countering magic and witchcraft. Chapter 6 will show that inadequate training of African converts to resist the attacks of spirit-beings is the Achilles heel of Christian discipleship in Africa. Clearly an effective discipleship model must take the spirit world seriously, unlike the missionaries did. The African Independent Churches understand the reality of evil spirits and the corresponding fear they engender in Africa, and therefore make ministry against evil spirits a prominent feature in their churches (see Chapter 6). But this still does not explain why traditional methods were not used when Christians did not have success in the demonic field. There must be other reasons why Christians did not use traditional doctors in the New Testament period and

beyond. The answer is most likely to be found in the methods and source of power of the witch-doctors.

#### 2.2.4.2 Their power is not the Holy Spirit's power

Most witch-doctors are not Christian and therefore do not have the Holy Spirit (Rom 8: 9; 1 Thes 1:5; 2:13). The ecstatic tradition of the prophets in the Old Testament, and the believers' reception of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's supernatural gifts in the New Testament, seem to be spontaneous events rather than the results of the long training of sangomas. This also points to the sangoma's power not being from the Holy Spirit. A similarity between ATR and Christianity is the ancestors and the resurrected 'ancestor' Christ both call and empower people to be spiritual specialists/leaders. An Old Testament example is the calling and empowerment by God of a person for the prophetic ministry. However, the methods of calling and inauguration in the two religions differ (see also below). As was noted in Chapter 3, in the calling to be a sangoma an ancestor (see below for discussion on the possibility that some spirits masquerade as ancestors) inflicts physical and/or mental sickness until the person agrees to become a sangoma. Failure to take on the calling perpetuates the illness and can even lead to death. The inauguration ceremony in ATR involves spirit possession unlike in Christianity. This is all very foreign to the Christian's call to and inauguration to the pastoral ministry and therefore surely cannot be connected with God's Spirit. Burnett (2000:177) notes that 'the general process of becoming a shaman is remarkably similar throughout the world', suggesting all traditional doctors' power is the same. A special relationship 'is established between the shaman and the spirit' (:177). The shaman learns the rites to call the spirits and 'how to control and even master the spirits' (:177). This relationship to and control of spirits is not part of the Christian leader's ministry and therefore the witch-doctor's power over evil spirits cannot be God's power. Further, the Christian pastor (in fact every Christian) is to only operate in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is only experienced after prayer for the Holy Spirit's aid, continual resisting of temptation and obedience to Christ, not through rites leading to possession or spirit contact, which also suggests that the sangoma's work is not through the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the greatest concern of evangelicals is the regular direct contact sangomas need and have with spirits of the dead, a practice strongly forbidden in Scripture. This would seem to be a further reason to view the sangomas' work as unrelated to the Holy Spirit.

#### 2.2.4.3 Possible sources of the witch-doctor's power

There would appear to be four possibilities that might explain the source of the witch-doctor's power: (i) non-moral/neutral power (life-force), (ii) good spirits more powerful than evil spirits, (iii) ancestors, or (iv) Satan and powerful evil spirits.

##### 2.2.4.3.1 Neutral/non-moral power

There is no reason why neutral/non-moral power would be out of bounds to a Christian. After all, does not the creation mandate in Genesis 1 endorse tapping into all the resources the earth has to offer? One thinks of the power in an atom and the amazing results when it is harnessed. However, it is difficult to perceive of a non-personal, physical force having any effect on an evil spirit. This is because a spirit is apparently not affected by natural matter and forces, e.g. gravity. Further, the whole initiation process and success of the sangoma point to personal spirit-beings as the sangomas power source. So option (i) seems unlikely.

##### 2.2.4.3.2 More powerful good spirits

Could good spirits more powerful than evil spirits be the source of the witch-doctor's success against witchcraft and illness? Burnett (2000:150) takes this view: a traditional healer uses 'similar methods to those used by the sorcerer to cause the victim's sickness. The healer therefore apparently succeeds in obtaining a cure by the use of his power and knowledge because it is greater than that of the sorcerer. ... A kind of warfare exists between the forces which do good and those which do harm to man [sic].' It was noted above that the New Testament apparently knows only of demons/evil spirits in the world, not also of good spirits, except unfallen angels and the Holy Spirit. The Bible never encourages looking to good spirits or unfallen angels for protection against the kingdom of Satan, so it is unlikely that the witch-doctor heals demonically-induced illness through good spirits (if they existed) or angels. In the Book of Daniel an angel appears to overcome a satanic attack while on his way to Daniel to provide God's answer to his prayer (10:1-14). But this scenario is completely dissimilar to the one where the sangoma heals a person from witchcraft. The writer believes God could heal demonic illnesses through an angel as they are his messages sent to serve God's people. But it is most improbable that witch-doctors who are normally not Christians could commandeer angels for their healing purposes. The Pharisees in Jesus' day seemingly

were able to exorcise demons, but Jesus implies that their source of success was not Satan's power, but probably the Holy Spirit working through their fasting and prayer (Unger 1981:119) and use of the Old Testament (cf Mt 12:27-28; Acts 19:13). Since the traditional healer uses similar methods to the witch and sorcerer, the sources of power appear to be the same. Evangelicals take very seriously the deceptive nature of Satan and (other) demons (see below) and their hatred of God and craving for worship. This means that demons could present themselves as good spirits in order to transfer the focus of attention onto them and away from God. There are thus a number of reasons for concluding that Option (ii) is unlikely.

#### 2.2.4.3.3 Ancestors

Could the ancestors be behind the witch-doctors' powers? The Bible never credits resisting evil spirits and undoing their destructive work to ancestors; nor are Christians ever encouraged to appeal to ancestors for this purpose. The lying and deceiving nature of Satan and certain demons as noted above and the fact that Satan masquerades as an angel of light as well as his human servants (2 Cor 11:14-15) would mean that impersonation of certain people and ancestors should be expected; in fact much literature confirms this (e.g. Unger 1981:112). 'In the case of the medium who professes to communicate with the spirits of deceased persons, the demon apes the personality and voice of the deceased' (Unger 1981:109). Clearly this would bolster the credibility of the ancestral cult and cause people to seek the aid of ancestors against witchcraft. In Section 6 in this Chapter the biblical view as perceived by evangelicals of the ancestors is dealt with in more detail, which seems to point to the unlikelihood of option (iii) (see also 2.2.4.3.4 which makes a case for Satan being behind cures of demonically-imposed illness). If option (iii) is rejected this strikes a heavy blow at the very heart of the ancestral beliefs which many Africans perceive to be crucial for an African identity. This matter is taken up in Chapters 5 and 6.

#### 2.2.4.3.4 Power from Satan's kingdom

If the witch-doctor's power is Satanic/demonic (option (iv)), it can be argued that this would imply Satan's kingdom is divided (cf Mk 3:22-26). There is no indication in the New Testament that Satan's kingdom is divided. So option (iv) at first seems a non-starter. But this option needs more consideration, especially if from an evangelical perspective the other three



options are more likely to be incorrect. When the training process to be a witch-doctor and the rituals and final inauguration ceremony are carefully analysed, evangelicals conclude that the possession that takes place is by a demon. This is partly because in the Satanic 'church' the rituals leading to possession by a demon/Satan are similar to those in the inauguration ceremony for witch-doctors. This strongly suggests the witch-doctor's power is demonic. Another reason for believing that the witch-doctor's power is demonic is the fact that they can use their power to both deliver/heal and hurt/destroy. With the Ndebele, the elder (through the ancestors), and the witch, tap into the same spiritual power, except that one uses this power licitly and the other illicitly (Brain [Online]). It is noteworthy that all forms of magic/occultic practices are prohibited in the Bible. It seems that this prohibition was not simply because God had provided another way to counter destructive spirit activity. The prohibitions are so strongly phrased that it appears it is something about the magic/occultic methods and sources of power that are being harshly criticized. The evangelical interprets this to mean that black and white magic both come from the same source, namely the kingdom of darkness.

It needs to be stressed at this point that Satan is the father of lies. Even at the end of the age his powers will be used to aggressively deceive people (Mk 13:21-23). It is therefore not impossible that Satan and demons co-operate to stage miracles that appear to be performed by good spirits or ancestors. This would give the impression that there are good spirits or ancestral spirits that are superior in power to evil spirits. This in turn would deceive and persuade the people 'to believe in the power of witch doctors and other traditional healers instead of trusting in God for healing' (O'Donovan 1995:310). If the same demon was shared by a witch and traditional healer, the same spirit would be responsible for a sickness and its healing 'giving the illusion of true healing' (O'Donovan 1996:323). Certainly this would not mean Satan's kingdom is divided if it served his purposes. If it is granted that there are in reality no good spirits or ancestors active in this life (see below), then if an illness is caused by one demon and the healing by another, this would point to a hierarchy in Satan's kingdom where weaker demons have to obey stronger ones. It is interesting to note that among (unfallen) angels some have greater power than others (O'Donovan 2000:179). Unger (1981:105) gives the words of the demon who possessed Mr Kwo in China: 'The demon declared he controlled many inferior spirits [demons].' The fact that Satan is described as the head of a kingdom of demons suggests different levels of authority (cf Eph 6:12) (MacArthur 2002:15; Ladd 1993:441). This could explain why in witchcraft some witches and witch-doctors are more powerful than others, and this could account for how a spirit could undo the

evil work of a weaker demon. If a less powerful demon was recalled from inflicting some illness or curse by a more powerful one in order to advance Satan's purposes, this would not constitute Satan working against his kingdom. Expulsions of evil spirits by other spirits 'does not represent division in the satanic kingdom nor instances of "Satan casting himself out," but satanic collaboration to extend his empire of evil ...' (Unger 1981:119). 'Diabolical exorcism does not produce true dispossession, but a mere reallocation' (:120). With reference to healings by demons, Unger (:140) says they 'merely shift the physical disorder into the psychic plane by bringing the "healed" person into some type of occult bondage.' He (:111) therefore questions the motive of the spirit when healing through the medicine specialist: 'Their object is not to liberate the victim but to deceive and enslave him' – there is always a 'costly price tag' (:112). Unger (:111) shows the frequent link between a controlling spirit and the worship of this spirit: 'It is not uncommon for the controlling demon to promise healing powers to his possessed victim and to grant supernatural abilities in exchange for worship and yielded service.' A more powerful demon could be expected to override a weaker demon by removing the illness inflicted by the weaker demon if it meant greater human subservience to the stronger demon. Because of the evil, cruel nature of demons and their lust for more power and its display, it would not be surprising if at times they worked against each other; however, Satan would no doubt punish guilty demons, unless their behaviour advanced his deception and thereby his kingdom. If the deception argument is correct, then Jesus' denial of the prince of demons casting out demons did not apply where exorcisms and demonic healings serve Satan's kingdom. Though the Pharisees apparently used similar methods to the witch-doctors in exorcism (Unger 1981:119), their success as stated above could ultimately have resulted from their monotheistic faith, prayer and use of the sacred Scriptures, rather than through demonic deception.

It is interesting to note that Jesus' exorcisms amazed the people (e.g. Mt 12:23). The crowds were full of praise because he cast out demons with merely 'a word' (Mt 8:16), no 'pitched battle' (König 2004:109), and could expel demons permanently (Mk 9:25), any of which the Jewish exorcists clearly could not achieve. This all indicates that Jesus' exorcisms were different to the exorcisms through witchcraft or demonic deception. This can be confirmed by noting the non-Christian methods of casting out demons: they depend 'largely on the efficacy of magical formulas, commonly compounded of the names of deities, and repeated with [meticulous observance of the] magic ritual over the bodies of the possessed' (Unger 1981:117-118). Methods used in India are more bizarre and even cruel: beating and

enchancements, and when all else has failed, lighted oil-soaked wicks are pushed up the nostrils and into the ears (Unger 1981:118-119).

There is no space in this dissertation to analyse the inner state and life of witch-doctors/sangomas; but such a study would be helpful in ascertaining whether their inner life and personality fit with that of the Spirit-filled Christian. Unger (1981) records many examples of the negative impact on the personality and psychological health of those who work with the spirit world, especially those who at times are possessed. They include split personality (:50), nervous disorders, mental illness, mediumistic psychosis, many psychosomatic disorders (:72), terrible bondage (:113), depression, idiocy, wildly ferocious actions, violent paroxysms and unconsciousness (:102). 'During an attack the victim's personality is completely obliterated, and the inhabiting demon's personality takes over completely' (:102). However, some of these states or conditions only manifest during an attack of the spirit. Between manifestations of spirit possession 'the subject may be healthy and appear normal in every way' (:102), which makes it appear as if spirit specialists are normal people with a special gift and training like specialists in other fields. The very nature of séances and spirit-possession, the tools of the sangoma's trade, go against the biblical picture of a Christian who is always to be filled only with the Holy Spirit, to avoid and resist demons, to use his/her own mind, and be in control at all times (1 Cor 14:32-33; Eph 6:18). It is very difficult for evangelicals with their high view of Scripture to avoid the conclusion that the whole system on which the witch-doctor's profession relies is steeped in deception and driven by Satan. However, it cannot be denied that sangomas have a strong passion to help people suffering from evil spirits through witchcraft; and that they do not believe their healing power is from evil spirits. It merely means that the methods and power used are not permitted in Scripture. Field (cited in Manley 2006:180) refers positively to the fruits of spirit-possession: 'And the fruits of most spirit possession in Ghana [and in Zimbabwe as far as Manley could judge] are wholesome and sustaining.' This information would have come largely from the traditional doctors who understandably would speak in glowing terms about their work, especially as it gives them status, power and financial rewards in the community. For a more accurate picture one would need to consult more ex sangomas to test Field and Manley's views on spirit possession.

#### 2.2.5 Conclusion

For the traditional African, the evangelical's conclusion about the methods of the witch-doctor must be very disturbing and appear terribly unkind and even outrageous. However, the positive side to the ATR's view on evil spirits is that it is true to reality and the Scriptures. Here we have perhaps the greatest agreement between ATR and Christianity. However, the Bible expands on the existence, nature, activities and destiny of evil spirits. If the biblical picture of an invisible, powerful, evil and worldwide kingdom headed up by Satan – an angel possessed by a desire for worship and total sovereignty and a hatred for God and His creation – is correct, every culture and every tradition in undeveloped, developing and developed countries has been embarrassingly affected by Satan. Every civilization has to reckon with spiritual deception and having lost its way through the subtle and powerful machinations of the craftiest and most evil being the world has ever known and will ever know. The biblical assessment of ATR is no more embarrassing for Africans than its assessment of Western culture is for Westerners. All are humbled and challenged by the biblical revelation.

### **3. The Human Race**

#### **3.1 The Biblical Doctrine**

##### **3.1.1 Created in God's image**

Humans are both physical and spiritual beings. Of all the creatures, only humans are capable of a personal relationship with and accountability to the Creator. Clearly humans are the pinnacle of God's creatures. This is because they were created in the image of God (Milne 1998:114,119) (see Chapter 2).

##### **3.1.2 The Fall and resulting judgement**

The first sin plunged the human race into sin – all are born with a sinful nature that makes all sinners in practice. Sin is defined as rebellion against God's rule and laws; and in a secondary sense it is an offence 'against one's neighbour, and against the sinner himself' (Tshilenga 2005:61). It reaches its worst in 'idolatry – that which dethrones God' (Carson 2008:46). The order in the sin chain is unwillingness to submit to God and then unrighteousness: 'the breaking of ... relationship with God, leading to a loss of harmony with him and thus with the

world, the community and other individuals' (Williams 1992:8). All problems 'are ultimately due to sin' (:8), including death which the Bible 'consistently links ... to sin (Heb. 9:27)' (Milne 1998:327). The Fall not only affected the human race, but the rest of creation: 'The consequences of the fall are universal and devastating because they are first and foremost revolt against the Almighty' (Carson 2008:47). 'Since man was appointed by God to be a steward over the earth, it should not surprise us that even nature was also cursed. This curse can be seen, for example, in the difficulties man faces in managing his environment, e.g. the problems of pests, tides, volcanoes and storms' (Nyirongo 1997:69).

Sin is met with God's judgement. Sin itself is also a form of judgement because it brings painful guilt and/or negative effects on the sinner sooner or later. God's wrath is poured out upon sinners in at least four ways: (i) Where there is gross persistent sin he gives people over to a depraved mind, which accounts for the truly evil and destructive human acts in the history of the world, e.g. Hitler's role in the Second World War; (ii) through judgement administered directly or mediated through circumstances and human agents (Milne 1998:331); (iii) through natural disasters (droughts, earthquakes, etc); and (iv) through death and judgement after death. The heavenly court is never far from the biblical writer's mind. References to temporal divine judgement (personal, tribal, and national) and eternal divine judgement occur throughout most of the books of the Bible. The Gospel thus firstly is bad news as it portrays one's sin and resulting divine judgement in this life and beyond. A small number of influential evangelicals have questioned the eternity of hell and argued for a limited time in hell and then annihilation, e.g. John Stott (see Carson 1996: 515-536 and Blanchard 1993:214-249 for insightful evaluation of the arguments for annihilationism and conditional mortality by two able evangelical scholars).

The story of world history cries out for a divine sovereign with omniscience and omnipotence to meet out appropriate punishment and introduce a world of righteousness and peace. The human race has evolved a system of government with legislature, judiciary, police force, army and prisons. Why then would it be thought that God would not use this type of government in his kingdom. According to the Bible God has issued his law for the human race and declared that he is their judge in the event of disobedience. Further, since all have broken his law they will all be righteously judged at the end of the world, including Satan and his demons/fallen angels. The biblical picture is all are sinners and face God's temporal and eternal judgement. This is where the Gospel fits in. It makes a way for sinners to be forgiven and declared

righteous through repentance and faith in Christ's righteousness and atoning death without compromising God's justice. Evangelicals believe the Gospel is thus the greatest news for the human race. No wonder that Christianity is a missionary religion.

The Bible does not present the whole human race as being absolutely evil or incapable of any good. There are those in their natural sinful state that commend, seek, attempt and achieve good, though this does not obliterate their sin and guilt.

### 3.1.3 Christ to the rescue

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news because it opens a way to forgiveness, imputed righteousness, new birth, conversion, justification, reconciliation to God and one's fellow humans, adoption into God's family, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, growth in Christ-likeness, and finally the redemption and perfection of the body and mind and the world. 'Jesus saw himself as the fulfilment of the entire redemptive expectation in the OT' (Milne 1998:173). Jesus is perfected humanity and so humanization is Christological. Jesus' ministry is to bring about the new humanity, a liberated humanity, humanity in its fullness, to finally restore humanity to something even greater than Adam experienced before the Fall.

Because the Gospel offers the best good news for humanity the evangelical is eager to promote, spread and defend it. If evangelical Christians thought any other religion had better solutions for society, they would embrace that religion provided its inspiration and authority could be better defended than that of the Scriptures.

### 3.1.4 Created for community

The human race was created for community. According to the Bible the tragedy of humanity is that sin has led to the breakdown of community with devastating consequences. Admittedly and sadly, local churches and interdenominational relationships have not always demonstrated the unity made possible through the Gospel. Poor discipleship of converts must be the number one reason for the church failing to enjoy its unity in Christ (see Chapter 6). Leadership in the churches, including in Africa, needs to develop a model for discipleship that can improve on existing ones where they are ineffective. This dissertation is an attempt at formulating such a model for the African church.

### 3.2 Comparison with ATR

#### 3.2.1 Origin of the human race

There are similarities between the accounts of the creation of the world in ATR and Christianity. However, the differences from the biblical account are immense, with African myths being quite fanciful. But the common denominator is that God or the Supreme Power created humans. This common belief aided the missionaries and subsequent evangelists and missionaries. ATR, as with Christianity, ‘upholds the dignity of all human beings’ (Pato 2000:92).

#### 3.2.2 Origin of sin and distance from God

Creation stories in Africa attempt to explain the origin of sin which is viewed as the reason for God’s withdrawal. ‘All African tribes agree that man [sic] was once innocent, but became a sinner by offending God in one way or another. There are numerous legends explaining this fall’ (Nyirongo 1997:59). In one of the legends O’Donovan (1995:80) notes that after an initial golden age of fellowship with God, human beings ‘repeatedly refused to share their food with a chameleon who asked them for some of their food. To punish them, the chameleon cursed the human beings and they became mortal and subject to death.’ In another story ‘it was because a woman kept bumping him [God] with her grain pestle while she was pounding the grain. In another story, there was a rope between heaven and earth. The rope was broken by a hyena, and ever since then, there has been no relationship between God and men’ (: 99). ‘Akan man’s version is expressed in the myth that when the old lady [mother of humans] was rude to God [through trying to reach him], the latter moved further away’ (Pobee 1979:114-115). ‘The common themes of these stories are that people originally felt confined and restricted by the closeness to God and wanted freedom, but this brought toil and suffering’ (Burnett 2000:32). Nyirongo (1997:59-60) and Mbiti (1969:95-99) give other African accounts of the origin of sin. The primordial sin therefore led not only to God’s displeasure and judgement, but also to him distancing himself. Clearly ATR believes in an original ‘sin’ that separated humans from their Creator. However, Christianity provides the most detailed and serious explanation of the origin of sin and the resulting relational and existential gap between humans and God.

### 3.2.3 The nature of sin and judgement

In Christianity it is God who prescribes ethical behaviour; in ATR it is the community that decides on what is right or wrong ‘depending on how it affects the group’ (Mndende 2006:162). Because of ATR’s emphasis on the transcendence of God, it ‘does not view sin as against God but as against the community, especially ancestors’ (Kibongi cited in Williams 1992:11). ‘The ancestors ... provide the essential focus of piety’ (Bediako 1990:11). Sin ‘is to disrupt social order or harmony’ (Emedi 2005:134); it is an ‘antisocial act’ (Bediako 1990:17). The amaXhosa ‘have no perception of sin in the Western theological sense’ (Mtuze 2003:34). As noted above, ‘Sin is not a direct offence against God, or a transgression of some moral law or virtue, but a breakdown of the complex structure of human relationships within the community including ancestors’ (Nürnberg 2007:27; also Tshilenga 2005:21). As Tshilenga (2005:20) puts it, the African views sin ‘as collective and anthropocentric ... any act that disturbs, ruins or endangers a community.’ Because sin in ATR is really against the family or tribe and the ancestors (mostly through breaking their traditions), ‘it follows that these [sins] are the ones one has to deal with’ (Nyirongo 1997:64). In ATR the stress seems to be less on sin causing the barrier between the people and God than on the world of spiritual powers (Thorpe 1991:108). The two views on who defines sin and what sin is vary substantially.

The ATR concept of sin approximates failure to keep the second table of the Ten Commandments: ‘The majority, if not all, of the moral sins committed in the tribe are forbidden by moral laws found in the Ten Commandments’ (Nyirongo 1997:61). ‘That which does not conform to the standard of *adoye* [love] is sin because it sunders the cohesion of society’ (Pobee 1979:118). A Shona Christian stated that ‘Christian ethics and morality were just as good as their traditional counterparts in that they “encourage kindness in a person” ’ (cited in Manley 2006:178). Africans ‘recognize virtues such as reliability, loyalty, wisdom, or coolness of mind’ (Nürnberg 2007:27). The African philosophy of *Ubuntu* (see Chapter 3) embraces morals, values and ethics that are also mostly Christian. Further, there are ‘some values intrinsic to the African mind that can be adapted or used for a better understanding or observance of the will of God’ (Emedi 2005:137). This means that from within ATR there are certain expressions of life, celebration and thought that exemplify Christian equivalents. This overlap was sadly not appreciated by the early missionaries. Sin in ATR would include failure



to observe Ubuntu. Though in ATR we find evidence of Christian virtues and values, it is important not to define sin in terms of culture, but of the supracultural (the Gospel) (:138).

A fuller description of Ubuntu is warranted here. Desmond Tutu (cited in Magadlela [Online]) describes Ubuntu as the essence of being human, which entails one's humanity/personhood being bound up in the humanity/personhood of others. He states this means 'When I dehumanise you, I inexorably dehumanise myself.' He describes the outcome of this understanding: 'you seek to work for the common good [e.g. show hospitality to, care for and go the extra mile for others] because your humanity comes into its own in community, in belonging.' Nelson Mandela (cited in Magaddela [Online]) states the following about Ubuntu: it 'promotes cohabitation: the tolerance and acceptance of all races and creeds in the human household ... Ubuntu reminds people in the household [and in organizations] that they are all part of the greater human family and that all depend on each other. It promotes peace and understanding.' Magadlela ([Online]) adds further that 'ubuntu means each one of us can only effectively exist as fully functioning human beings when we acknowledge the roles that others play in our lives ... It is about accepting our inherent interconnectedness. ... It engenders self-respect [for oneself and all humans]' and 'the environment.' He also states that it emphasizes togetherness and teamwork. There is, however, a significant difference between Ubuntu and Christian ethics: motivation and intention. In Ubuntu there is a strong emphasis on what one stands to gain for oneself, e.g. fuller humanhood; 'disinterested love seems to be rare' (Nyamiti 1987:62). In Christian ethics, doing good for others and respecting them is totally altruistic. Also, though Christianity sees the importance of others and relating to them in mutually beneficial ways, it would not say this adds to one's humanity, but only to one's happiness and fulfilment. Christianity views full humanity as resulting from creation. In Christianity good works in a communal context result from expressing one's humanity, whereas in Ubuntu one's humanity is incomplete apart from the group and harmonious participation in the group.

If the traditions about the ancestors were divinely inspired, and if the essence of sin is disobeying them, sin is equivalent to disobeying God. This is partly the position argued by Pobee (1979:111,117). But evangelicals feel that ATR has a view of sin that falls far short of the biblical view as God and the first tablet of the law hardly feature. Breaking the laws of the first tablet (laws dealing with one's relation to God) is far more serious than breaking the commandments in the second tablet (laws relating to inter-human relations). However,

breaking the second tablet of the law is equivalent to sinning against God as humans are created in his image (Bediako 1990:17). It takes the Christian revelation to make this vital point that is lacking in ATR – to ‘bring the need for expiation into a wider context’ (:17) – and more spectacularly to provide the needed atoning sacrifice. Further, breaking the second tablet stems from breaking the first tablet (cf Rom 1:18 – the order of ‘godlessness’ and ‘wickedness’ might be highly significant), pointing to the priority of knowing and keeping the laws of the first tablet. ‘Failure to honour God [breaking the first tablet] is the root of all evil in society [breaking the second tablet]’ (Kasali 2006:1354). This means in ATR keeping the ethical rules (which as noted above are the same or similar to those in Christianity) would be more effective if the first tablet was kept.

In ATR an individual’s sins ‘constitute a community evil’, meaning the whole community is ‘considered responsible’ and therefore pays the penalty (Tshilenga 2005:23). Further, because individual sin implicates the community and ‘sin is primarily against the community or tribe, it is the same community [those alive, but especially the ancestors] which takes the responsibility to punish or chastise the wrong doer’ (Nyirongo 1997:63), not God as in Christianity. ‘Life after death ...does not entail reward or punishment – these are believed to take place in the here and now while people are alive’ (Mndende 2006:163). Mbiti (1969:44,4647) notes that in ATR God only judges sin in this life; there is ‘no further punishment in the hereafter’ (Nyirongo 1997:71). Such a concept of sin as that which leads to eternal punishment ‘is far removed from the African understanding of God and therefore of Christ’ (Parratt 1987:71). ‘Because sin is perceived in this [horizontal] way, it follows that there is no fear of judgement from God’ (Nyirongo 1997:71; Mugabe 1995b:13) – ‘Anxiety about judgement in the hereafter is not part of African experience’ (Mugabe 1995b:13). The result is that ATR does not need a mediator ‘pleading for him [the African] before God for forgiveness of sin’ (Parratt 1987:71). Another reason in ATR for watering down its conception of sin, unlike in Christianity, is the fact that ‘It is very difficult for an African to accept inherent imperfection ...’ (Williams 1992:7).

Another difference between sin in Christianity and ATR is that the age and status of the person one offends determines the severity of the sin. To offend a greater person, e.g. a chief or a more senior person, is to offend more severely (Nyirongo 1997:63). The biblical understanding of sin is more consistent and not relative as it understands all sin to be equally

serious as all sin is ultimately against God, and breaking one law is equivalent to breaking the whole law.

Tshilenga (2005) has an insightful dissertation on collective sins in Africa. This idea flows out of the centrality of African community, of 'collective being,' of 'living collectively,' of a worldview that 'is communal' (:12,11,13,18). He (:24) defines four kinds of collective sins: (i) grouping sin, (ii) social sin, (iii) cultural sin, and (iv) structural sin. Grouping sins result from temporary groups developing the same mind and acting as a united body. The direction can be sinful, e.g. killing a criminal or foreigner. Social sins include social evils frequently found in society, but not accepted and practised by everybody, e.g. child abuse; it also covers sins generally accepted by all societies, e.g. slavery in ancient civilizations. Group sins can develop into social sins. (:29-31,33-35.) Cultural sins are the sins of a people's lifestyle (culture), e.g. xenophobia (:42,51). Cultural conflict due to prejudice between two cultures is another example (:36). Tshilenga (:42-43) lists the key sins of a number of African tribes based on interviews with people in these tribes: hypocrisy, pride, violence, hatred, treachery, restlessness, not being serious about God, stealing, laziness, timidity, prostitution, treason, dishonesty, corruption, and nepotism. Structural sin 'is the sin inside the structure or sin of the structure' (:44), e.g. apartheid. There are three possible responses from those experiencing structural sin: acceptance, tolerance or revolt (:48). Tshilenga (:91-132) takes many pages to analyse Africa's past and present and concludes that there are many examples of the four kinds of collective sins. He (:128-130) lists the main categories: *Corruption* (in government and society); *Witchcraft* (not as such, but its negative influence: fear, harming development, killing people, usurping the place of God); *Magic* (excuses for failure; animosity and jealousy); *Fatalism* (limiting God); *Veneration of Ancestors* (no deviation from the group is tolerated; he sees this veneration as the sin of Africa); *Tribalism* ('In a tribe people feel security, but tribalism is not love, it is selfishness'; it 'is partly a sin of injustice and also a sin of idolatry'; 'The famous African communality, which is so attractive, is but the tree, which hides the forest (... Ruanda!); *Fear* (even educated and rich Africans live in fear of the invisible world); *Jealousy* ('to be successful is dangerous'). Tshilenga (:130) sees these socio-cultural sins as having 'affected many structures in Africa, which are thus founded on fear, tribalism, protectionism, jealousy, witchcraft, and all the rest.' Clearly Africa's collective sins are preventing Africa's development. This focus on African collective sins does not mean that the West does not have its collective sins – Africa knows this only too well. Christianity, not

ATR, offers a solution to these sins through Christ: forgiveness and victory over them and something better to put in their place.

#### 3.2.4 Death

ATR teaches that every person has a soul/spirit as well as a body and that the spirit lives on after death. This is considered in detail below in Section 6 of this Chapter. This view of life and death exactly parallels the biblical description of the human being before and after death. O'Donovan (1995: 81) mentions an African legend that a soul after some time in the spirit world enters a child growing in the womb. This can be repeated 'so that the same soul is re-born into the same family many times over many generations. However, part of the soul stays in the spirit world and acts as a guardian spirit for the living person.' O'Donovan (: 82) states that 'The idea that human souls have an existence before the conception of a human life in the womb is not found in the Bible and it is not supported by modern science.' His arguments are found in pages 82-85 of his book. In ATR there is no unending eschatological age (see Section 6 of this Chapter).

#### 3.2.5 How God communicates with humans

As already noted, in African traditional societies there is the belief that God 'now deals with man [sic] through ancestors and nature gods' (Nyirongo 1997:60). The ancestors are believed to be 'the mouthpieces of the Creator' (Mndende 2006:164). Christians, on the other hand, are to hear God speaking primarily through the Scriptures, which contain a complete and final revelation, secondarily through his Church guided by the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and rarely through angels. The closest Christianity comes to communication with deceased Christians is reflecting on their earthly lives and being inspired to emulate their good works, but always being sure to reject whatever in their lives was contrary to the Scriptures (see Section 6 below).

#### 3.2.6 Community

There is a parallel between the church and an African community, namely both are made up of the living and the living-dead. In the Old Testament God is the God of Israel or the Holy One of Israel (together these titles occur over 231 times, and 7 times in Acts) (Wilson

2007:144). The term Israel here includes the dead (cf the references to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob or the forefathers). In the New Testament the church, living and dead, is also linked to God – Father (as his children), Son ('in Christ;' Christ is the head; Christ is the senior brother), and Holy Spirit (indwelt by him). These terms linking God with his people (in Old and New Testaments) stress that they belong to God and have been chosen by him. This close bond between the people and God and their election by God to be his people are lacking in ATR.

Both Christianity and ATR stress the history of God's people (Israel and the church) and the family, clan and tribe respectively. Both have their traditions that are passed on formally and informally to subsequent generations which form the basis of their unity and blessing.

The emphasis on God being the God of Israel and Christ the head of the Church, brings out strongly that Christians are one body, one people (cf corporate analogies for the church). The church is 'not a random bunch of individuals all going off in their own directions' (Wilson 2007:145). Wilson (:145) goes further and states, 'Human beings to God are like blobs of paint to Michelangelo: they only reach their true beauty and potential when combined with others to form his Sistine Chapel, the people of God.' This comes very close to an aspect of Ubuntu in ATR, namely that one's humanity is incomplete apart from the group (see above). Wilson has in mind church unity through mutual loving care and edification. Mndende (2006:170) gives a definition of Ubuntu that overlaps Wilson's point: it 'means showing respect and empathy for human beings and helping those who are physically, emotionally, socially or spiritually in need' Thus in both ATR and Christianity we find the views of commitment to community – 'life-together and relationships between persons and peoples' (Setiloane 2000:22). However, the Christian is motivated by love, whereas the African is more motivated by the fear of shame before the community and punishment from ancestors and community if he/she breaks the community harmony (see above and below). A major difference between ATR and Christianity is that the African individual 'is only fulfilled in community' (Sidhom cited in Williams 1992:6), whereas in Christianity one's higher 'fulfilment lies in his relation to God', and 'community centredness [as in ATR] leads to depersonalization of the individual, a lack of true humanity' (Williams 1992:6).

In ATR the great respect shown to the elders, chiefs (endowed with ancestral powers) and ancestors, necessary for unity, means they tend not to be held accountable. A person 'is not

supposed to contradict a superior' (Nürnberg 2007:38). A good example for the writer was the problem a member of staff at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape experienced with the older pastors in her African denomination. They were guilty of gross inefficiency and even laziness, but were not held to account by the younger ministers and congregations because of their senior status. It is felt that respect for them means they should not be rebuked and thereby shamed. This creates a problem where immorality for instance is involved, and leads to a drop in spirituality and discipline in the local church. Needless to say, it also creates enormous problems for efficiency, quality control and output in the work place.

### 3.2.7 Conclusion

In ATR the doctrine of creation of humankind, of original sin, the nature of sin, and life after death, are only a shadow of the biblical equivalents. For the evangelical it is crucial to be right in one's knowledge of the solution for sin. Further, every remedy for sin will ultimately fail to be satisfactory if sin and its seriousness are not fully understood. In Christianity the emphasis on moral and spiritual growth within one's relationship to God and each other to enhance unity and mutually edifying fellowship, and their perfection in the new heavens and earth, means Christianity can be seen as an enlargement and fulfilment of ATR.

The social commitment in African communities is an example to Western Christians and harmonizes with expectations of Christians in church communities. Here there is a bridge between ATR and Christianity. Unfortunately the individual is undermined in ATR because the group is put before the individual. Christianity brings out more strongly that every Christian in his/her own right (and every other person in the world) shares the image of God and is a unique person, rather than that this image and uniqueness is tied to his/her group/clan/tribe. This biblical truth needs to be guarded against an exaggerated individualism, but treasured because it leads to each person's uniqueness and full expression of his/her humanity, which glorify God. When this happens the group and therefore society benefit more. Maximum development in the individual and wider society are thus linked.

## **4. The Person and Work of Christ**

### 4.1 The Biblical Doctrine

#### 4.1.1 Creator

God created and sustains all things through his Son.

#### 4.1.2 Christ's dual nature and salvific work

God's plan of salvation was to prepare a people (the Israelites) to bring forth the Messiah/Saviour, through whom eternal salvation would be purchased for sinners – Jews and Gentiles, including Africans (Nyirongo 1997:20). Salvation progresses beyond this life and world and climaxes or is consummated in the next life and new world where Christ is physically present. Christianity clearly cannot be understood apart from Jesus Christ as his role is central and foundational to Christian salvation. Evangelicals believe the Bible teaches Jesus' eternal sonship and that after his incarnation he was, and will be eternally, fully God and fully man, qualities necessary if Christ was to qualify to be the saviour of sinners. To ensure future salvation Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to indwell Christians to make Christ real to them.

#### 4.1.3 Jesus' ministry was the breaking in of the kingdom of God

The kingly power of Christ was demonstrated over sickness, hunger, weather, Satan, demons and death. Christ's present position is one of exaltation and reign over all powers in the seen and unseen worlds. Christians have been translated from Satan's kingdom to Christ's kingdom. Christ is now ruling over all things for the growth, protection and ultimate glorification of the Church. Christians own Jesus as their king and endeavour to submit to his reign. 'There can be no question. Jesus Christ is king of the universe' (O'Donovan 1995:57).

#### 4.1.4 Christ meets all the Christian's needs

Through Jesus' past and present ministry all the Christian's spiritual needs, including protection from demons, are met. The Christian's material and physical needs may be brought daily to a loving heavenly Father for provision; however, they are not always immediately met, at least to the Christian's expectations. This is due to many possible reasons, some of which are comprehended much later in one's life. Sometimes the church fails to be a conduit

of God's provision. However, as noted above, God's providence is always at work, though often mysteriously.

#### 4.1.5 The Lord Jesus Christ must be believed and received

To be a Christian the person and work of Jesus Christ must be believed and Christ received as Lord. His lordship is over every area of one's life. Chrisope (1982:54-87) clearly demonstrates that this was the situation in the New Testament church. His survey of Acts shows that the resurrection-exaltation-lordship of Jesus was the most prominent element of apostolic preaching (:54-58). From 2 Corinthians 4:5 he (:58-59) proves that for Paul the heart of the apostolic *kerygma* is the proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus. He also demonstrates that the confession 'Jesus is Lord' is the single most predominant Christian confession, which also occurs numerous times as 'our Lord'; and that this confession was known and acknowledged by all believers (:61-85).

### 4.2 Comparison with ATR

#### 4.2.1 Role of deities in creation

The mediatory or partnership role of Christ in creation parallels the belief in parts of Africa that creation is through deities (Gehman 1989:132). However, God's eternal Son, was not created as the deities seem to have been; and nor is his deity less than God's as seems to be the case with the divinities.

#### 4.2.2 Religious saviours

There is no comparable person to Jesus in ATR or other religions: the '*Logos* who became man for us men and our salvation surpasses every possible comparison available to us in the history of religions!' (Parratt 1987:107). The closest ATR comes to the salvific Jesus is in her ancestors, specifically the most powerful ancestors who were potent kings or leaders during their earthly lives. However, the ancestors' role in salvation falls far short of Jesus' role in Christian salvation (see below). Death in ATR should not happen, is attributed to evil spirits, can never be undone, and leads to ultimate loss of identity and possible extinction. There is no hope as in Christianity of resurrection to a new life on a new earth where life and community



as known in this world will be raised to new heights and never end. ATR is a this-worldly religion ‘concerned with protection, restoration, preservation, survival and the continuance of human, societal, and environmental life *in this world*’ (Mugabe 1995b:12, emphasis added). The Christians’ salvation occurs in this life and throughout eternity in perfected humanity. This salvation results from the fact that Jesus shared in God’s deity as well as their humanity, suffered unto death, rose again and thereby defeated the powers of sin, Satan and death and reconciles repentant sinners to God. ATR has no qualified saviour for dealing with the vertical dimension of sin and its eternal consequences. The closest thing in ATR (see Chapter 3) to the incarnation of the Son of God are spirits and familiars appearing in physical form – animal and human; but this phenomenon is at best only an analogy, not a parallel, of the incarnation.

The incarnation of Jesus was a representative incarnation. His humanity was universal. This means in a real sense that he shares Africa’s human heritage (Bediako 1990:14). He is the Christian African’s elder brother and great ancestor, greater than any other ancestor, who lifts ancestorship to heights not previously possible thus rendering the ancestral cult unnecessary through its perfect and glorious fulfilment in him. But Jesus is also the progenitor of a new humanity. Christianity thus takes African Christians to levels of a purer and higher humanness.

The Epistle to the Hebrews demonstrates that only a high priest and sacrifice that are both divine and perfectly human can reconcile sinful humans to a holy God. Bediako (1990) thus concludes that Christ’s sacrificial role ‘fulfils perfectly the end that all sacrifices seek to achieve’ (:35) and therefore brings the sacrificial system to an end, and his high-priestly role ‘renders ... all other priestly mediations obsolete, so revealing their ineffectiveness’ (:37). He (:43) deduces from the portrait of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews that ‘it becomes clear that for the first readers of the epistle, as for us, there is no valid alternative to Jesus Christ.’

Christianity clearly brings salvation in ATR to a greater level, especially fulfilling the need for divine atonement of sin (see below), and thus fulfils the longings and hopes for a salvation that ATR cannot provide.

#### 4.2.3 Atonement

Because of the absence in ATR of the belief that all sin is ultimately against a holy, just God, it is thought there is no need of a divinely provided atonement for sin and resulting justification through faith in order to be reconciled to God (Gehman 1989:255; Pobee 1979:119). Muzorewa (cited in Williams 1992:13) states that ‘one of the roles of the community [not of God] is to cleanse and forgive the departed by ritual, so that ancestors are morally pure.’ Unless ancestors have received the equivalent of a temporary body between death and resurrection (see below) or Christian resurrection it is difficult to see how they can be ‘morally pure’. Christianity teaches a vertical dimension of sin not present or appreciated in ATR, which only God can ‘cleanse and forgive’ through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus.

Evangelicals believe the Bible does not view all aspects of human traditions positively and as divinely inspired. In fact Jesus has redeemed Christians ‘from the empty way of life handed down to [them] ... from ... [their] forefathers’ (1 Pet 1:18). Christianity, therefore, distinguishes between human traditions and divine/special revelation (the Bible) and does not attribute unquestioned value or saving efficacy to the former as in ATR. Since ATR is seen by evangelicals as based largely on human traditions as with any other non-Christian religion and resulting culture, they believe those African traditions that contradict and undermine the Gospel must be put aside (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Sin against fellow community members in ATR is taken seriously and every effort, often including sacrifices to the ancestors, is made to resolve the problem and ensure no ancestor reprisals. Once harmony is restored the matter is closed. Christianity, however, shows that more than this approach is needed as sin is ultimately not only a horizontal matter and no animal sacrifice can appease God. Thus it can be argued that Christianity builds on ATR by opening up a higher level of understanding of sin and atonement – that sin is ultimately against God and that God requires a unique, perfect human (and divine) once-for-all sacrifice which no living person or ancestor can provide.

The need of full atonement for forgiveness and reconciliation to God through Christ and ATR’s inability to provide them require stressing in discipleship of converts in Africa.

#### 4.2.4 Material and spiritual blessings

ATR teaches that honouring the ancestors leads to material blessings. Spiritual blessings are noticeably absent as noted by Parratt (1987:100): ‘The passport to the place of receiving God’s gifts is opportunity in education, employment and general development’. In Christianity the Christian receives ‘every spiritual blessing in Christ’ (cf Eph 1:3-14). Material blessings are not foreign to Christianity, and both spiritual and physical blessings broaden into the spectacular in the life to come on the new earth. Further, Christ’s blessings sometimes are times of testing to ascertain the genuineness of the Christian’s faith and also to strengthen genuine faith. This is because proven and growing faith in God is more precious to him than the most valuable item on earth and because it leads to his praise (1 Pet 1:7). ATR does not appear to have this understanding of hardships and trials. The writer could not find any evidence in Mbiti’s comprehensive book, *African Religions and Philosophy*, to support this understanding. All that could be found were explanations of the various causes of and methods of treating illness and other forms of suffering. Nothing was found on God using suffering for the sufferer’s good. It seems that in ATR when suffering cannot be removed in the traditional way and/or through prayer to God, it is viewed as punishment from God or its purpose treated with agnosticism and both result in resignation to the trial. How different to the Christian’s approach to trouble, hardship, persecution, famine and illness: God’s love sustains, maintains and buoys up the believer (Carson 1984:155).

Christianity can be viewed as fulfilling the spiritual needs like the needs for peace with God, God’s felt presence and love, spiritual development, protection from demons, and other blessings not even consciously perceived. These blessings enable Christians to live a dynamic life to the full (and even more so in the life to come), which are the goals of ATR. Christianity also corrects ATR’s stress on material blessings and puts the focus on the more important spiritual blessings that flow from Christ’s person and work, which ultimately guarantee the meeting of every human need, including physical needs and longings, in the future consummation of the eschatological age to be fully inaugurated by Christ at his return.

#### 4.2.5 How salvation is received and maintained

In Christianity, unlike ATR, salvation is received by faith alone, not by faith and works. It could be argued that in ATR faith for salvation is placed in the ancestors and traditional doctors; but more specifically it is faith in human customs and rites related to the ancestral cult. Evangelical inclusivists (see Chapter 2) would see Christian salvation as possible

through ATR if an African had never heard the Gospel but had displayed behaviour marked by a desire to know God and to live a moral life pleasing to him. Since in the light of Chapter 3 these conditions do not seem to be met in ATR, at least seeking to know God intimately, even inclusivists must acknowledge that Africans need to hear the Gospel.

In Christianity, because salvation is by faith alone, Christians ‘need not be afraid of losing their salvation or of being snatched away by Satan, or by death. Even if they fall into sin, they remain God’s children’ (Nyirongo 1997:77). This is not so in ATR’s understanding of salvation: ‘Loss of children, or health for example, implies lack or decrease in one’s salvation. Preservation of one’s salvation also depends on a person’s efforts, not on God’s grace’ (Nyirongo 1997:77). ‘In short: *he has to earn his salvation*’ (:157). ‘The idea of grace ... found in orthodox Christianity is a problem in Africa, where there is an emphasis on the idea that man must do something for salvation’ (Williams 1992:13).

Christianity not only greatly broadens salvation as understood in ATR, but also ensures it is certain by making its reception by faith alone.

#### 4.2.6 Conclusion

König (2004) comments on the many titles and images that are used in the Bible to describe Jesus: prophet, high priest, king, messiah, lamb/sacrifice, bread, rock, water, word, light, image of God, servant, Son of Man, Son of God, Lord of lords, redeemer, saviour, deliverer, and liberator (and König states there are many more). He (:22) observes that no one else has ‘ever been described by so many titles and images’. He (:204) notes, though, that there is ‘more than mere diversity to Jesus, however impressive this might be.’ There is ‘UNBELIEVABLE GREATNESS AND GLORY’ (:204). König (:209-211) rightly states that Jesus’ claims and the rest of the New Testament’s teaching about Jesus show that either Jesus was mad and the apostles deceived or liars, or he is who Scripture proclaims him to be; he argues for the latter position. He (:215) concludes his study of Jesus with the words, ‘he is more than his disciples could ever have fabricated, prayed for, or imagined.’ König (2004) demonstrates that Jesus’ life and ministry can only be understood from an Old Testament perspective. But more importantly for the dissertation, he shows that Jesus’ ministry ‘*continued, fulfilled, enriched and interpreted the Old Testament*’ (:183). Chapter 4 of the

dissertation shows how close ATR is to the Old Testament. This fact, together with the incomparable uniqueness of Christ, should make it easier to present Christianity as the continuation, fulfilment, enrichment, interpretation, but also correction, of ATR. This approach need not imply that ATR is divinely inspired or that it does not need correction; it is to simply take ATR as resulting from Africa's handling of natural revelation. This approach emerges from Chapter 4.

## **5. Discipleship**

### **5.1 The Biblical Doctrine**

The core of Christian discipleship is submitting to the lordship of Christ and maturing in his likeness. Discipleship involves growing in the following areas: knowledge and worship of God, knowledge and experience of Christ, holiness and righteousness, and service in the church and world. In short, it has to do with becoming more and more like Christ in his character, service and mission. It is living in and for him, i.e. being saturated with and totally committed to him and his agenda. For evangelicals 'discipleship' and 'sanctification' are words that essentially describe the same thing; the latter describes the process, the former stresses the activating and establishment of the process. Hesselgrave (1980:23) notes that to make disciples 'is the sole imperative and the central activity indicated in the Great Commission.' Because of this fact discipleship gets substantial treatment in this dissertation. Another reason for this extended treatment is its relevance to the dissertation. Kretzschmar (1995d:45) reminds her audience that 'the early Church was instructed not to make converts, but make disciples.' Clearly failure here will radically and negatively affect the Christian's influence in the world.

#### **5.1.1 The centrality and pre-eminence of Christ in the Christian's life**

A careful reading of the New Testament reveals the centrality and preeminence of Christ in Christianity. The discipleship of converts therefore needs to teach the convert this and how this needs to be worked out in daily life.

##### **5.1.1.1. Demonstrated from the New Testament**

Christians are:

- saved through Christ alone (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5-6)
- joined spiritually to Christ – they are in Christ (1 Cor 6:15-17; Col 2:19; 2 Cor 5:17; 11:2)
- blessed in him with every spiritual blessing (forgiveness; regeneration; reconciliation; redemption; propitiation; justification; adoption; inheritance; future glorification – see Eph 1:3-14)
- indwelt by the Holy Spirit who mediates the nourishing and equipping presence and power of Christ (Eph 3: 16-17; Jn 15:4-5)
- to be disciples of Christ (Mk 8:34; Mt 28:18-20)
- to be focused on Christ in all of life (Col 3:1-2; Eph 3:17)
- to have an ongoing and firm faith in Christ (Col 2:5; 1:23)
- to live for Christ (Phil 1:21)
- to stand firm in Christ (Phi 4:1)
- to be filled with Christ's word (Col 3:16)
- to know Christ better (Eph 1:17)
- to be those for whom Christ is all, i.e. for whom Christ is everything (Col 3:11,4)
- to spread Christ's gospel to all nations (Great Commission, Mt 28:16-20)
- to suffer for Christ and his Gospel (Phil 1:29)
- to seek the growth of Christ's kingdom (Mt 6:10; Acts 28:31)
- to grow in Christ-likeness (Rom 8:29; Gal 4:19; Col 1:28)
- to submit to Christ's word and agenda (Col 2:6)
- to be those who defend themselves from demonic influence through Christ's gospel and its power (Eph 6:10-18)
- to have no other master but Christ (Eph 4:15)
- to do all in the name of Jesus (Col 3:17)
- to live a life worthy of Christ and his gospel (Col 1:10; Phil 1:27)
- to exalt Christ in life and death (Phil 1:20)
- to please Christ in every way (Col 1:10)
- to be those whose living is dictated by the teachings of and about Christ and not their human traditions or worldly wisdom (Col 2:8; Mt 15:1-6; Mk 7:6-13)
- to trust God through prayer to meet their needs through Christ (Eph 4:19)

- to use their spiritual gifts given by Christ through the Holy Spirit in Christ's service in the world and the church (1 Cor 12-14)
- to long to be with Christ (Phil 1:23)
- to long for Christ's return because then they will be transformed into his likeness and dwell with him forever (Phil 3:20).
- those for whom Christ is the pattern, inspiration and goal for Christian living (Rom 5:17-19; 8:29; Phi 2:5-8; 1 Jn 3:2-3).

Milne (1998:215) is surely right when he says, 'The fact of God incarnate carries the profoundest application to our entire attitude to life in this world.' Sanctification 'affects every area of our being' (:151) – it 'permeates the intellect, emotions and attitudes ...[so] that everything that makes him what he is ... are given a new direction; namely, towards Christ' (Preskett and Ramachandra 2003:79). When one experiences and fulfils the items in the above long list, which is not exhaustive, one is living a life that is drenched with the presence, power, will, plans, purpose, goals, kingdom and glory of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul describes this lifestyle as one in which 'Christ is all, and is in all' (Col 3:11). In the light of the above list, Christians are to be totally fulfilled in Christ, fully focused on him, to seek his fullness and maturity in him, and to be aware of his relevance to every area, circumstance and moment of life as he works out everything 'in accordance with his pleasure and will' (Eph 1:5). Nothing must detract from his centrality and pre-eminence in the Christian's life. This supremacy of Christ is further strengthened in Jesus' role as chief shepherd and Lord of God's people and God's world.

#### 5.1.1.2 Demonstrated from the Letter to the Philippians

To see how totally Christ is to dominate the believer's life, one need only consider the way he dominates Paul's letters. Philippians can be taken as an example. It has **104** verses. In this short letter there are **68** references to Jesus (including pronouns), **twelve** to the gospel (including 'the faith' and 'word of life'), **twenty-three** to God, and **two** to the Holy Spirit (including 'the Spirit of Jesus'). Clearly Christians serve a triune God; but the major focus of their lives is to be the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### 5.1.2 Holiness

Christians are called to live a holy life – a life of separation from sin and dedication and consecration to God. The root idea in the Old Testament ‘is that Israel was set apart from all the nations to be the people of God’, and in the New Testament it is that ‘the church is the new people of God and stands in contrast to the world’ (Ladd 1993:644).

#### 5.1.3 Teaching

The Christian is to be taught all the Scriptures. This teaching includes the biblical traditions that are to be followed. The Pastoral Letters stress again and again the importance of teaching converts the faith. The very existence of the whole Bible is testimony to the importance of teaching. The stress on teaching the faith is also so that heresy can be combated. The lethal nature of heresy – teaching that opposes, undermines or nullifies the Gospel – necessitates the convert being taught so that he/she may take a solid stand against it and be secure from its influence. If syncretism empties the Gospel of its power it must be avoided. Teaching biblical truth clearly, contextually and persuasively is vital for attaining spiritual maturity and impacting one’s society (see Chapter 6).

#### 5.1.4 Prayer

Both Testaments reveal that the ministry of prayer occupied a prominent place among God’s people (Milne 1998:293). Again and again the believers are exhorted and commanded to appeal to God, and God alone, in every and any situation or contingency for needed help and provision and blessing on their lives, work and ministry. Christians are also to pray for conversions to Christ and for the government, both relevant to moral, political and social transformation in Africa (see Chapter 6).

#### 5.1.5 Service

Discipleship/sanctification is also concerned with humble service (Milne 1998:276-277). ‘The church is a servant community’ (:307). This service is to be directed to Christians and non-Christians. Because of the nature of the Gospel the high point of Christian service is evangelism leading to more worshippers of God. Christianity is thus an inevitably propagating and proselytizing faith – mission ‘is a fundamental biblical ingredient’ (:272).



The Bible encourages Christian service both negatively and positively. It teaches that the Christian believer, and even whole churches, should expect discipline directly or indirectly from God for persistent sin, spiritual regression, and neglect of Christian service – from a mild rebuke, serious rebuke, sickness, excommunication, to the most severe judgement of death. Positive motivation for Christian service is the free gift of salvation and the promise of rewards in both this life and particularly the life to come.

The supreme service of God is the worship of God. ‘The essential meaning of the word *worship* in both the Old and New Testaments is *undivided service or devotion to God*. ... It is to give the whole of ourselves to God ’ (Nyirongo 1997:40). ‘It is an attitude to the whole of life’ – an attitude of living one’s whole life for Christ with thanksgiving to God (Milne 1998:275). Worship is thus not limited to moments of private and corporate praise of God in song and prayer. Further, the worship God expects now is based primarily on the fuller revelation of the New Testament. We worship now ‘not by observing ritual and sacrifices centred in the temple, but through faith in Christ’ (Nyirongo 1997:42). Both in the Old and New Testament, worship is to be exclusively given to God, who is revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and no other god, whether idols of stone/wood/gold or idols of the heart. A further reason for avoiding idol worship is that according to the Apostle Paul demon power undergirds it, which gives it the appearance of divine worship.

#### 5.1.6 Supernatural guidance

Supernatural guidance in Old Testament and New Testament times came from angels or the Holy Spirit usually through the prophets. But in both Testaments genuine supernatural guidance would not contradict the truths in God’s prior revelation. ‘He [God] always works in conjunction with the Word and hence our experience of the Spirit [which would include supernatural guidance] needs the continual check, balance and direction of the whole written Word of God’ (Milne 1998:257). In the New Testament period, especially the later part, supernatural guidance was rare, showing that seeking such guidance was being replaced by study of what would be recognized as the New Testament canon, the Church’s basis for guidance. This indicates that supernatural guidance should not normally be sought. In addition, Milne (:256-257) mentions other aspects that help facilitate guidance: natural aptitudes, personality, and dramatic circumstantial factors. New Testament passages where the Holy Spirit is mentioned as the source of guidance are interpreted by Lloyd-Jones

(1974:194-196) as inner impressions/pressures of the Spirit; but these impressions came after using the mind, and even consultations with others.

#### 5.1.7 Unity and community

‘Biblical religion is inescapably corporate’ (Milne 1998:259). The Christian Gospel births a universal community ‘grounded in a common participation in the life of God’ (:275) manifested in closely-knit local, caring congregations. ‘Belief could not be a privatized response to the good news of Jesus for God’s intention had been to create a new society which stands out in bright relief against the sombre background of the old world’ (Tidball 1997:111). Unity in the Christian community is repeatedly emphasized in the New Testament; it is something to be rigorously pursued. ‘Individuals cannot be reconciled to God without being reconciled to the people of God among whom their experience of God’s grace immediately sets them’ (Milne 1998:260). Milne (:265) mentions eight biblical metaphors or images that describe the corporate nature of the true church and its union with and unity in Christ. ‘The early Christians’ rich communal life was the major attraction of the Christian faith to the pagans of their day’ (:276). ‘This unity, however, does not imply total uniformity’ (:266) – a matter that is taken up in Chapter 5 because of its relevance to the African Church set against the historical background of Western cultural imperialism. Growth in discipleship, therefore, includes growth in understanding the source of, means to, and importance of a unified local church in a divided world.

#### 5.1.8 Spiritual warfare

Above it was shown that Christians are faced with the powerful kingdom of Satan that daily attacks them. However, as noted above, Christians have been given spiritual armour to defend themselves, and are therefore not to be fearful of Satan and his cohorts. Much has been written about spiritual warfare against Satan and his kingdom of demons (cf MacArthur 2002:8-9 for a summary). The heart of the Christians’ defense is the person and work of Christ applied with understanding, faith and confidence. ‘The secret to this victory [over sin and Satan’s power] is the resurrection power of Christ, made available to us through the Holy Spirit who lives in the Christian’ (O’Donovan 1995:109). ‘The Bible recognizes that spells and curses and people such as witches and sorcerers do have power. However, their power is nothing in comparison with the power of the Almighty God (Isa. 47:9). This gives us a clear

hint that the Christian does not need to fear the spells or curses of a sorcerer or witch, no matter how strongly they are applied' (O'Donovan 1995:311). The Lord's disciples cast out demons; and even professing but not converted Christians cast out demons in Jesus' name (Mt 7:21-23) showing Jesus' power over demons.

Clearly a lack of knowledge of spiritual warfare and its application will result in a return to traditional African methods when facing demonic attack. '... our greatest weakness in our battle with Satan is ignorance – ignorance both of his schemes and of Christ's power' (Smith nd:2). Smith (:24) provides a helpful summary of Christian armour to be used against the powers of darkness:

In summary, it is worth noting that the various items of our armour relate to our salvation and our sanctification. Our first line of defence is unwavering assurance of salvation – the certainty that our sins are forgiven and we are in a right relationship with God. Our second line of defence is sanctification – living right and walking closely with the Lord so that the devil does not get a foothold in our lives. Our third line of defence is the authority of God's Word stored in our hearts by which we can repel the enemy.

Another part of the Christian's arsenal is aggressive prayer soaked in Scripture and that appeals 'to the authority and power of Jesus, both by virtue of who he is (his divine person) and what he has done (his atoning work)' (Smith nd:26). As mentioned above, aggressive Gospel proclamation is another weapon to use against the kingdom of Satan. The Gospel sets people free. Smith (:28) notes that the early church '*spent little time addressing the devil and much time addressing the people [with the Gospel].*'

'It is for lack of discipleship that so many professing Christians in Africa have turned back to traditional practices in times of personal need' (O'Donovan 1995:228). Once again it can be seen how important thorough discipleship in Africa is. This dissertation is the writer's effort at developing a more effective model of discipleship for the Evangelical Church in Africa.

## 5.2 Comparison with ATR

### 5.2.1 The centrality and pre-eminence of ancestors in the lives of Africans

Milne (1998:212-213) notes that Jesus stands apart from all other religious leaders for the following reasons: He 'was not just a special holy man, a great religious teacher, a spiritual master or miracle-worker, or even the greatest of all of these categories. He was nothing less than Emmanuel, God himself with us'. African ancestorship 'is but an aspect of the broader phenomenon of 'eldership' ' (Burnett 2000:64), which means the ancestors are essentially no different to what they were before reaching ancestor status, namely fallen humans – they are just without their bodies and older than the living. The ancestors also lack Jesus' divine nature and his perfectly sinless life, and do not play a comparable salvific role. Clearly there is no equal to Jesus, including among the ancestors. There is a parallel between Christians imitating Christ and African traditionalists imitating their ancestors. However, the difference is that the reasons for this emulation are not the same. Christians imitate Jesus primarily because he is the perfect human; traditionalists only follow the traditions of the ancestors in order not to anger them and be punished by them. Another parallel is the relationship of Christians to Christ and African traditionalists to the ancestors: Christ and the ancestors are both shown respect and obedience. But the respect and submission accorded living elders and kings and the ancestors hardly approach the attitude and response expected of Christians to Christ. Another similarity is the dominant place the ancestors and Christ play in the lives of the living. The difference, however, is that Christ's relationship to Christians involves a greater intimacy ('in Christ') and constancy (cf Eph 3:17); also, that Christ takes the pre-eminence in every area of the Christian's life, whereas in ATR the ancestors' traditions are to be followed.

Finally, there is a similarity between ATR and Christianity in the area of power. Both Christ and ancestors exercise power over the living. However, Christ's power is supreme as he is Lord over all the living and all the living dead. The Holy Spirit makes Christ's presence and power real. The supremacy of Christ means that every activity and tradition of the ancestors must come under the rules, teaching and reign of Christ. Another implication for Christians of Christ's pre-eminence is that ancestors must never be allowed to occupy a role that detracts from his position and status. It has been noted that for Africans the ancestors have the pre-eminence which Christianity does not permit.

Christ is superior in every attribute and action of the ancestors. Jesus thus takes the position, function, wisdom and authority of the ancestors to a higher, exclusive level and can therefore be seen as making the ancestral cult redundant. This means that the role of the ancestors can be viewed as climaxed and fulfilled in and replaced by Jesus' role as saviour and Lord.

### 5.2.2 Holiness

Christ's life displayed perfect righteousness, absence of sin, and unwavering commitment to the mission given him by his Father. Such godliness is the goal of the Christian life to which the Christian is to strive and which will be attained at the return of Christ. ATR has no such equivalent focused spiritual journey. In ATR the goal is merely to be a good traditionalist: 'although man's heart is acknowledged to be crooked, it is not totally depraved. Through training in the observance of taboos, morals and customs of the tribe, a person can become a good tribesman' (Nyirongo 1997:63). Unlike in ATR, the Christian needs to be born anew and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a godly life – his/her own strength even with training is insufficient for this purpose. Christian holiness lifts African traditional living to a higher level of holiness, righteousness and dedication to the service of God. ATR does not have the equivalent of the permanent indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, which is another reason why the ancestral cult is not needed in Christianity.

Moral power in Christianity is intrinsic rather than extrinsic as in ATR. Colonialism and extensive Western influence have constituted a real test of the internal moral power of ATR, especially in the cities where African traditionalists are away from their cultural communities and their sanctions and surrounded by different worldviews, cultures and temptations. The morality and ethics of African culture seem to have largely failed the test in these circumstances – witness in townships the looser commitment to the culture, the crime, poverty, violence, corruption, immorality and its daughter the AIDS pandemic, lack of commitment to education and poor results, and other vices. 'All over the Third World the traditional social fabric is coming apart. Anomie is the result' (Nürnberger 2004:86). O'Donovan (2000:40-73) graphically describes the ugly side of urbanization and the cultural crisis and death in the cities. It needs to be said here that Western secular culture also seriously lacks an intrinsic moral power. Since Africa can never return to pre-colonial, pre-modern days, it is not helpful to perpetually blame colonialism and Western influence exclusively for Africa's current plight. This is not to deny that many of Africa's woes and lack of technical progress are largely due to colonialism and Western cultural and economic imperialism (see below). Africa should, however, admit that its moral dynamic is deficient. Since there is no anticipation of future judgement in ATR, there is 'a tendency to moral laxity' (Zide cited in Williams 1992:15). Africa needs a new moral engine that can ensure

morality that leads to progressive societies under any conditions. Another weakness in Africa's morals is that community-based ethics are limited to one community. 'Hence, whereas it would be wrong to steal from within the community, it is acceptable to steal from someone else' (Williams 1992:12). The new South Africa has witnessed massive stealing from state hospitals and other government departments. Such a double ethic is not permitted by Jesus. It is all too obvious that many Christians (white and black) have neglected Christian disciplines, like meditation in the Scripture and prayer, to the detriment of their moral behaviour. Again the importance of discipleship of converts from the beginning is vital if the full moral strength of Christianity is to be witnessed in Africa.

Since ATR has failed Africa morally and ethically, is it not appropriate to challenge its religious and moral basis and recommend changes?

### 5.2.3 Teaching

In the traditional African tribe, and to a lesser degree among urban Africans, the people are schooled in the traditions of the ancestors and pass them on to the next generation. In ATR there is little formal training in the traditions; it is mostly informal (Mndende 2006:161). This could be because adults generally all adhere to the traditions and so the children are socialized in them. Mndende (:164) states that the more formal teaching is done by the elders, who teach the youth orally. There are thus parallels between passing on the traditions of the elders in ATR and church leaders passing on the teachings/traditions and practices of Christianity. Puberty rites of incorporation into the community are accompanied by religious-cultural-ethical instruction. Discipleship therefore after conversion to Christ, especially at the time of baptismal initiation into church membership, would obviously be considered normal and so this ideal opportunity should not be lost for grounding the convert in the Christian faith and life.

### 5.2.4 Prayer

It has been noted that since all sicknesses and misfortunes in ATR are traced to evil spirits or ancestors or people, prayer to God plays little or no part – 'Hence recourse to God is rather rare, and in most cases the general attitude is almost 'practical atheism' ' (Nyamiti 1987:59). In the Akan religion 'the average supplicant is oblivious of the Supreme Being and treats the

ancestors as ends in themselves. ... the real givers of ... [the] good things of life' (Pobee 1979:65,66). Nyirongo (1997:23) notes that the ancestors overshadow God: 'Though the pre-Christian acknowledged God's existence in nature and could call upon Him for help in times of distress, he did not seek and trust Him as Lord and Saviour of his life. Instead he devoted his attention to non-human spirits and ancestors.' Among the Shonas, Zulus, Xhosas, Bushmen, and others 'the Supreme Being is overshadowed by ancestral gods [spirits] – is indeed pushed so far to the circumference of their thought that often his very name is forgotten' (Smith quoted in Nyirongo 1997:46). Imasogie (1983:76) is aware that the ancestors are treated as deities, but states that 'underneath the seeming polytheism of traditional African religions lies a monotheistic motif.' Bahemuka (1989:11) states that 'Africans are men and women of prayer' (cf Mbiti 1969:61-66), but clearly not in the Christian sense where prayer is made exclusively to God. However, Imasogie (1983:60) does acknowledge that God is not really necessary as he 'has made provision [divination, sacrifices, protective charms and amulets] by means of which one may deal with life's problems.' Those Africans who see God as transcendent/distant Force, will find it difficult to see prayer as a possibility (Williams 1992:5). In ATR 'The ones who really care are ... [one's] ancestors and nature spirits' (Nyirongo 1997:46). Hence recourse to them, especially ancestors, marks every rite of passage, all calendar rituals, and rites of crisis (Burnett 2000:90-98). It is the ancestors who are approached when sicknesses, problems and disasters occur. Clearly prayer to God is minimal in ATR, and also somewhat meaningless and unnecessary if God has delegated his authority 'to the ancestors and gods to deal with the relatively trivial affairs of men [sic]' (Pobee 1979:65). ATR provides little motivation for prayer to God.

Pauw (cited in Williams 1992:13) states that when prayer is offered to God in Africa, it typically focuses on immediate needs, like healing. In Christianity, however, prayer also entails supplications for future needs and personal spiritual growth. Further, in Christianity, unlike in ATR, prayer also is a time of fellowship with God. It has been noted that some Africans see the ancestors as mediators of prayers to God and his answers. Clearly such prayer makes intimacy with God impossible. In Christianity, unlike in ATR, prayer reflects dependence on God alone for help, guidance, healing, protection, deliverance and provision of other needs. This is why in Christianity prayer is only made to God. In Christianity God sometimes uses living people to be a channel of his provision, but, unlike in ATR, not (normally) the living dead (see below). Further, the fulfilment of the sacrificial system in

Christ, means that in Christianity sacrifices and offerings no longer accompany prayer. The Bible presents many reasons for suffering, deprivation and trials, but it is always to God alone that the Christian must turn, not mediums, witch-doctors and the ancestors. When the reason is sin, confession and repentance are required of the sufferer.

Mtuze (2003:49) states that 'The ancestors do not purport to displace the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ from their position as direct line of communication ... Working through the ancestors does not undermine the Holy Spirit'. This is highly questionable. Why should an indirect line of communication be used if a direct line is available? It would be an insult to God to not utilize the latter exclusively, especially as in Christianity it is his expressed will. Evangelicals therefore see no valid basis for prayer to or via the ancestors, and believe it detracts from Christ's supremacy and high priestly ministry and therefore can only meet with God's disapproval and even judgement. For evangelicals the concern is not about what the ancestors think about their behaviour and practices but what Christ thinks. He is their Lord, mediator, intermediary, standard, judge, rewarder, not the ancestors. Mtuze's claim amounts to permitting syncretism which is forbidden in the New Testament. He takes this position because he believes the ancestors are legitimate intermediaries between the living and God. In ATR the apparent aloofness of God implies the need to approach him through intermediaries as in the case of a tribal king. But the Christian has an intermediary, Christ, and is to go straight to God through him in all situations. This makes the work of the ancestors redundant (assuming they played an intermediary role before Christ's coming). Dwane (cited in Mtuze 2003:53) seeks to justify prayer to the ancestors by claiming that Christ's care and prayers to God/Christ are linked with the care and prayers relayed by the ancestors, and thereby renders the latter 'perfect and pure.' For the evangelical this is pure speculation.

Once again, this time in the area of prayer, it can be seen that for the evangelical the ancestral cult presents a great challenge to the supreme, exalted and central position of Christ in the Christian's world and life. The African and Christian worldviews need be clearly understood by the converts and how Christ perfectly fulfils the role of the ancestors in ATR.

#### 5.2.5 Service

Just as Christianity has positive and negative inducements to serve God and others in the community, a major part of discipleship, so also in ATR there are similar incitements.



However, in ATR the rewards or judgements apply to this life, but in Christianity they are also experienced in the life to come.

Christianity by its very claims and loving dynamic is a missionary faith. However, as noted above, the evangelizing dimension of Christian service is missing in ATR: the religious cult is 'confined mainly to 'natural' groups, the family, clan, or tribe' (Parratt 1987:62). 'No one is converted to the religion; everyone in African society is believed to be born into the religion' (Mndende 2006:158). Through active proselytizing, a biblical mandate, the Christian community is enlarged into a worldwide community. This means Christian discipleship in Africa must include a vision and preparation for evangelism and church-planting throughout the world. Interestingly this is happening. One tool to facilitate this is to demonstrate how much more Christianity offers than ATR in terms of relationship to God, e.g. access to his love, grace and power, and in terms of holistic, human and community development. ATR attempts to meet all the spiritual, material and community needs and longings of the people. Christianity fulfils these in deeper and more satisfying ways, and ultimately perfectly in the new earth, and these facts should strengthen the appeal of the Gospel. This advancement and superiority of Christianity to ATR needs a place in evangelism and discipleship.

Christianity's creed is to love God and also one's neighbour. This, as in ATR, should involve service beyond the confines of one's private world into the wider arena of public life where myriads of needy people are crying out for loving care and various interventions: better education, elimination of child abuse and rape, freedom from emotional and physical battering in marriage, liberation from dehumanizing poverty, better housing, and many more items. Christians are not only to seek to transform their personal lives and churches, but also their society; they are also to aim at increasing recognition of and submission to the righteous rule of God throughout the world, including in the way the physical environment is treated by humanity. These themes appear less prominent in ATR. Christians in Africa need to release God's love through them so that Christianity can be seen to be God's answer to the great needs in Africa. Only such Christianity will be relevant to Africa. Failure to meet existential, contextual needs in Africa will be a stumbling block to the Gospel because such a Gospel 'bears no relation to what people are actually experiencing' (Kretzschmar 1995b:34).

ATR does not have the equivalent of Christian worship. A distant God, a belief in a spiritual realm that daily impacts the living, occasional prayer to God, a fear of the spirit-world, and

participation in the ancestral cult and occultism to appease the ancestors and control evil spirits, are not equivalent or conducive to worship in the Christian sense. The ‘cult of ancestors and other cosmic realities tends to overshadow divine worship’ (Parratt 1987:62). Some sacrifices and offerings are offered to God in ATR, but mostly to other lesser spiritual beings (Mbiti 1969:58-61) such as ‘divinities, spirits and the departed’ because God ‘does not need such things’ (Mbiti cited in Mtuze 2003:49-50). Mndende (2006:164) believes the ancestors wield divinely delegated authority over the living and are ‘the mouthpieces of the Creator’. Edowu (cited in Nyirongo 1997:2) regards ‘all the lesser deities or intermediaries as “refractions of the supreme God” or “diffused monotheism”.’ From these last two quotations, and from God’s apparent distance and the centrality and nature of the ancestral cult in Africa, evangelicals deduce that ancestors are probably worshipped rather than venerated and thus that there is idolatry/polytheism in ATR knowingly or unknowingly. Gehman (1989:231) states that not only those practising ATR, ‘But in fact, all men have removed God from Lordship and have become idolaters by substituting the creature for the Creator as their daily source of dependence.’ It is interesting to note that ‘In Greco-Roman culture, especially during the Roman period, the deification of men, both living and dead, becomes increasingly common’ (Craffert 1999a:60). The repeated campaign in Scripture against idolatry/polytheism is clear proof of its widespread influence and power in traditional societies and also that God will brook no rivals. This is why in the Old Testament ‘faith in Yahweh effectively eliminated ancestor veneration, oracles and divination’ (Nürnberg 2007:64), and the New Testament has only one Lord who is to be worshipped. The ancestral cult definitely interferes with Christ’s preeminence and Lordship and the exclusive worship of God and his Son (Mt 4:10; 6:24;). African scholars like Mtuze and Mbiti believe that in ATR the ancestors are only venerated, not worshipped, and therefore the ancestral cult can live harmoniously with Christian worship (see Chapter 6). The way black scholars define how ancestors are to be viewed and treated means they are not gods. However, the evidence on the ground seems to be that the ancestors are not viewed this way by ordinary Africans. Evangelicals feel that the ancestral cult finds part of the reason for its existence in Romans 1:21-22,25: exchanging the worship of God for the worship of something created, i.e. deceased humans in ATR.

Christianity cuts out the intermediary ancestors and opens the door to the direct worship of God, thus ensuring he gets the worship of which he is worthy (firsthand and not secondhand

worship). This means the need to worship God in ATR can be seen as fulfilled in Christian worship.

The Christian's relationship to Christ is likened to a marriage relationship. Just as in a marriage other entanglements are possible, and sometimes do happen, so it is possible for an African Christian to temporarily return to the veneration/worship of ancestors and be unfaithful to Christ (see Chapter 6). Evangelical discipleship in Africa needs to take into full account the temptation to syncretism in worship and in all other areas of Christian doctrine and life. The temptation to revert back to ATR (cf Hebrews for the temptation of Jewish Christians to return to Judaism) will be especially strong for those who face ostracism or persecution for avoiding syncretism, especially from family members. Thus discipleship needs to prepare converts specifically to handle these hardships. Clearly repentance for unfaithfulness and forgiveness and restoration are doctrines that apply here as to any other sin a Christian in a moment of weakness commits (see Chapter 6).

#### 5.2.6 Supernatural guidance

In both Christianity and ATR there are incidents of supernatural guidance. In Christianity, though, this kind of guidance, unlike in ATR, is extremely rare because the Bible covers every area of life and thus provides comprehensive guidance. In Christianity, supernatural guidance is sought and comes from God primarily through the Bible. In ATR it is sought from the ancestors through diviners, mediums and doctors. Christianity forbids turning to the spirit world, no doubt because there is a real danger of being deceived by demons and being attacked and controlled by them. Another reason for the prohibition is that God wants believers to go directly to him; and any supernatural guidance he gives is only through his Spirit, whether mediated through a person or granted directly. Here we have another example where Christianity lifts an aspect of ATR to a higher level – receiving guidance from God, especially through the Scriptures, instead of the ancestors.

#### 5.2.7 Community and Unity

In both Christianity and ATR community is very important. Both stress 'a peaceful and harmonious style of life' (Pato 2000:92). However, in ATR the community results from and is centred in the common culture unlike in the Christian church where 'Our community with one

another consists solely in what Christ has done to both of us' (Petersen cited in Sklar-Chik 2000:201). Customs and rituals, private and public, preserve community in ATR. It is true that public 'rituals' 'bring the local community of Christians together' (Burnett 2000:103), but these do not flow out of a common culture but the Gospel, which transcends all cultures as it is supracultural (see Chapter 5). In ATR, community and unity are to be pursued only within the tribe, not universally as in Christianity. ATR, therefore, cannot create a truly united cross-cultural family or community as in Christianity. Perhaps this is one reason why democracy has not worked well in Africa. Christianity when truly experienced can unite different peoples without them having to first deny their cultures (cf the different images in the New Testament that stress the corporate nature of the church based only on the Gospel) (see Chapter 5). The Gospel actually respects and endorses all cultures – except those features that clash with the Gospel – and aims to unite a divided world without creating cultural uniformity (see Chapters 5 and 6). There is nothing that can compare with Christianity's capacity for global union and community. Surely unity within the whole human race is the ultimate unity that the world desires and greatly needs. Christianity has a universal vision of human community unlike ATR. Since ATR promotes corporate communities based on a common inherited culture, it fosters culturally isolated or insulated groups that do not proselytize – 'Each religion is bound and limited to the people among whom it has evolved ... it cannot be propagated in another tribal group' (Mbiti 1969:4,103). Since evangelicals believe in religious error in all cultures, it is permissible, and expected of them, to critique all worldviews and cultures in order to cleanse them. Chapter 5 tackles the relationship between culture, identity and the Gospel and shows that Christianity does not destroy culture, partly because it is the foundation of personal identity, and because the Gospel is supracultural and thus able to be expressed through any culture.

Corporate identity and oneness are strengthened in the church, unlike in ATR, by a strong focus on *individual* growth in biblical knowledge, wisdom, godliness, spirituality, service and a personal relationship with God. In Christianity the spiritual dimension of the individual is comprehensively spelt out unlike in ATR: it covers actions, thought life, motives, and relationships not only to fellow humans, but especially God. And it is only as there is individual spiritual health and growth that corporate unity can be fully achieved. Christians are to 'find there own way into the future in the power of God and in responsibility before God' (Nürnberg 2007:78,106), but not in isolation from the Church. This emphasis on the individual is lacking in ATR which emphasizes the group to the detriment of the individual.

Societal unity in ATR is to ensure the dangerous cosmic forces are not disrupted as this invites their retribution. Similarly, when Christians fail to behave in ways required by the Gospel it leads to God's corrective discipline, mostly through church discipline.

ATR's emphasis on unity within the group (cf Ubuntu) can be seen as an *evangelico preparatia* for the unified fellowship required of the church at the higher multicultural and global levels where mutual acceptance, love and edification achieves maximum individual and group growth. Once again Christianity is seen to take ATR to a higher level.

#### 5.2.8 Spiritual warfare

It has been clearly noted above that the Bible recognizes witches and sorcerers and their ability to cast spells and curses and inflict harm and illness and even death (O'Donovan 1996:311). Generally in ATR there is much fear because of the power of unpredictable and capricious ancestors and evil spirits to wreak harm and for people jealous of one or personal enemies to manipulate evil spirits against one through the services of traditional doctors. O'Donovan (1996:311) states that in Africa 'the fear of witches and witchcraft is the greatest single fear.' Not so for the Christian: 'although the Bible recognizes the power of magic, it is not something which should cause the Christian fear. The power of God is continually seen to be greater than that of the sorcerer' (Burnett 2000:152; also Donovan 1996:311). Balaam prophesied that 'There is no sorcery against Jacob, no divination against Israel' (Nu 23:23). Burnett (2000:152-153) refers to Moses' successful contest before the exodus from Egypt with the Egyptian magicians, and the failed attempt by Balak to curse Israel. Phiri, a professor of African Theology at the University of Natal, said that witchcraft against them was so strong when she and her husband were building their house that they 'had to have prayers at every stage of construction to *neutralize* its demonic impact' (cited in Siemon-Netto 2002, emphasis added), showing Christ's power over witchcraft.

Burnett (2000:153) also notes that Africans, especially those on the fringes of society or part of a minority group, fear being accused of witchcraft or sorcery because they will be banished or killed. This is the dark side of the fear of witchcraft. In Christianity, however, the Gospel results in the restoration of social harmony through forgiveness if necessary, reconciliation and mutual loving acceptance.

Mtuzi (2003:54) seems to endorse using both Christianity and the ancestors – ‘a double-barreled gun’ – for resisting the powers of evil spirits. An example of this is when ‘a Christian Congolese mother goes to her pastor with an urgent request for prayer for her sick baby only to resort to a local witch-doctor’s “cure” under the cover of darkness’ (Hesselgrave 2006:88). This sounds like a good and effective strategy; but God does not sanction it. This is because Christianity has sufficient weapons, and being in cahoots with the devil (see above and below) opens one to demon oppression or possession and the judgement of God. The missionaries (and Western leaders in Africa) generally failed in discipleship due to their lack of understanding of the spirit world and how to effectively combat it with Christian weapons (see Chapter 6).

Arnold (1989) explores the concept of magic in the Epistle to the Ephesians in light of its historical setting. He shows that the historical, social, religious context was one of ‘flourishing belief in the demonic realm [and of magical practices] evidenced in the papyri, inscriptions and Jewish texts’ (:171,168). He argues that the Epistle is ‘not therefore a response to cosmic speculation’; but rather, it is ‘a response to the felt needs of the common people within the churches of western Asia Minor, who perceived themselves as oppressed by the demonic realm’ (:171). In the Letter ‘the emphasis on the power of God working on behalf of believers juxtaposed to the might of the “powers” of evil working against the believers’ (:168) shows that the Letter was written to help the believers ‘cope with the continuing influence and attacks of the sinister cosmic “powers” ’ (:165). This conclusion is supported by the cosmic Christology of the Letter – that Christ is over the hostile spiritual powers/forces in the world (:165). It seems that there was a move to ‘combining magical and mystery beliefs with Christianity’ to offer the most effective ‘protection from the “powers” ’ (:168). This is precisely what has happened widely in African Christianity. Arnold summarizes the power motif in Ephesians: God’s power is superior and focused in Christ’s Lordship over the cosmic spirit powers to which Lordship the Christian has access and must exclusively appropriate in his/her fight against the evil powers and their manipulation in sorcery/magic; the Letter reveals that the cosmic powers are evil spirits led by Satan ‘bent on enslaving the world in resistance to God and sin’ (170); ‘The author intimates that even the “powers” which were once believed to be most helpful and easily manipulated, such as Artemis-Hekate and the Ephesia Grammata, were actually the ones who enslave’ (170); the Letter also shows that power must not be used for benefit of the individual but for the whole

church (:170); and God's power is 'the foundation and basis for ethical living' (:170). Clearly Arnold's book is a vital resource for evangelical pastors in Africa. As Arnold (:168) states, Ephesians 'would prove particularly helpful to converts from a background of strong demonic beliefs and fears' (:168). The demons' fear of Jesus and subjection to him are themes that need to be buried deep in the hearts of African Christians.

The triumph of Christ over the powers of spiritual darkness and the residency of the Holy Spirit in the Christians are good news for Africa. 'A correct understanding of the nature and extent of Jesus' victory over Satan will prevent us fearing our adversary. He is a deceitful enemy, but he is also a defeated foe' (Smith nd:15). This needs to be a central pillar in the discipleship of African converts to Christ. Clearly Christian spiritual warfare will abstain from using any medicine, charm, emulet or any other item linked with spirit activity. This will necessitate refraining from using the services of any traditional practitioner that is not relying solely on the natural healing power of suitable herbs.

#### 5.2.9 Conclusion

Once again it has been demonstrated in another area, namely discipleship, that there are similarities between ATR and Christianity and that the differences that are not insignificant.

It has been noted in Chapter 3 and in this Chapter how entrenched the traditional beliefs about the ancestors and the fear of the spirit world are in the mind, soul and life of the African. Thorough discipleship is therefore essential if Christ is to have his rightful preeminent place in every area of the African Christian's life. It has been stated repeatedly that this requires faithful discipleship by the church: 'Living, personal, growing faith in Jesus Christ is the *sine qua non* for dealing with the ancestral cult. There is no substitute' (Gehman 1989:184). Ultimately the ancestral cult must be judged by the Gospel. Any fear of reprisals from the ancestors if any of their traditions have to be discarded must be faced with Gospel armour (Eph 6) and in the context of a loving and caring church.

## **6. The state and activities of the deceased**

It has become clear that it is in the area of the role of the ancestors that the greatest number of differences exist between ATR and Christianity. For this reason the state of the dead in Christianity is given more treatment than the other doctrines in this Chapter. A pastoral model of discipleship of converts in Africa clearly needs to take into account the ancestral cult, but with insight, integrity, wisdom, sensitivity and pastoral skill.

## 6.1 The Biblical Doctrine

### 6.1.1 What happens at death

The teaching of the Bible is that at death the soul/spirit leaves the body (Gn 3:19;35:18; 1 Sam 28:19; Pro 2:18; Isa 26:14; Ja 2:26; Mt 6:25;27:50; Mk 12:24-27; Lk 23:46; 2 Cor 5:8; Phi 1:22-24; 1 Thes 4:13-14) (Milne 1998:120). In the Old Testament the spirits of the Israelites went to a place called *Sheol* (Isa 14:9-11). Death 'is a descent into a netherworld, usually called Sheol' (Craffert 1999a:45). King David after the death of his baby could say that he would join his son later (2 Sam 12:23), clearly in sheol (cf Gn 37:35). Sometimes 'sheol' is a synonym for 'grave' (Ps 16:10; 30:3). In the New Testament there appear to be three destinations for departed spirits: a place called Abraham's side (Lk 16:22a), hell (Lk 16:22b-23) (see below), and heaven with Jesus (2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:22-23; 1 Thes 4:13-14; Rev 6:9-11) (see below). Though it is problematical to ascertain the present state and location of departed human spirits, it seems from a biblical perspective one can talk of them as retaining their earthly personal identity (Isa 14:9; see below). Evangelicals do not agree on all the details, especially of the intermediate state between death and resurrection. The evangelical debate around the millennium is not considered by the writer, not only because of the different positions taken, but because the millennium does not really affect this dissertation. In Catholicism the intermediate state for believers is purgatory (some might leave purgatory and go to heaven before the intermediate state ends): 'those who have died in a state of grace are given an opportunity to purge themselves of the guilt of their sins before finally entering heaven' (McGrath 2007:479). Purgatory won't feature in this discussion because evangelicals believe it lacks 'any substantial scriptural foundations' and is 'inconsistent with the doctrine of justification by faith' (:480). They believe purgatory occurred at Calvary.



Many verses indicate that on the final Day of Judgement those outside of Christ will be sentenced to eternal judgement in hell (or only a finite period of judgement in hell and then annihilation according to a few evangelicals as noted in Chapter 2). This could mean that the Lazarus account may refer to what happens after the great assize. The writer, however, sees the Lazarus story as applying to this age as Lazarus requests permission to go back to his living relatives to warn them of the reality of hell. This would mean that Old Testament unbelievers and deceased non-Christians experience God's judgement, at least a foretaste of it, during the intermediate state (this would seem to require a temporary body; see below on whether the deceased Christian requires a body for the intermediate state). In Luke 16:19-31 there is a permanent chasm between hell, where the rich man's spirit went, and 'Abraham's bosom', where Lazarus' departed spirit went. Nevertheless, their proximity and visibility to each other (23-26) strongly suggest that hell and Abraham's bosom (paradise) together constitute sheol of the Old Testament. Kidner (1994:643) sees in Isaiah 14:13-15 a hint of these divisions or distinctions in sheol which were made clearer in the New Testament. Even if the Lukan passage is not to be taken literally, it is teaching about one of two destinations after death: a place of judgement and a place of bliss. Milne (1998:335) notes that in the Bible's various descriptions of the afterworld 'we are thrown back on symbols ... [but] while they cannot tell us everything, they will not mislead us.' The story of Lazarus suggests the way into heaven at his death was not yet opened to any departed spirits.

It is clearly difficult to know if departed human spirits are outside time and space. The promise of the resurrection of the body and life on a new earth suggests that the believers' future eternal post-resurrection existence will be in time-space. Nevertheless, it seems more can be said about the present condition and realm of deceased Christians. It is plausible that heaven is both a spiritual realm and a material world in space-time (McGrath 2007:482). This is because Christ is there in his resurrection body. Further, it is from heaven that the New Jerusalem will come to the new earth, suggesting that heaven can be in time-space. If this view of heaven is correct, the spirits of the deceased Christians are in a spiritual space-time realm. This would also support the view that during the interim period between death and resurrection the believers will have a body (see below).

Based on a two-part view of sheol, it seems likely that after the triumphant death of Jesus the way was cleared for the Old Testament saints to be transferred from their part of sheol (the section in sheol where the spirits of Abraham and of the other Old Testament saints went) to

heaven (cf Rom 3:25-26, Hebr 9:28, 2:10 and 9:7) to be with Christ. Blanchard (1993:43) concludes from the Old Testament that ‘there are the first glimmers of hope that God’s people will be delivered from Sheol.’

In the Old Testament the departed spirit is described as ‘being gathered to his people/fathers’ (Gn 25:8; 47:30; Ju 2:10) or ‘resting with his fathers’ (1 Ki 2:10; 2 Chr 27:9). This phrase is distinguished from death and the place and act of burial (Gn 25:7-10; 47:30; 2 Chr 27:9; 28:27; 32:33; 2 Ki 13:13; 14:20; Gn 49:33; 50:12-14), and therefore indicates that the souls of the departed went to sheol, the place of departed spirits, which harmonizes with the other Old Testament verses above. Being gathered to or resting with the fathers (ancestors) was apparently then not just another way of saying the person died and was buried in the burial ground of the fathers. Craffert (1999a:7), however, disagrees: ‘The fact that the bones of the deceased were all gathered in the repositories explains the often found expression ‘rested with his fathers’ (2 Ki 8:24), ‘gather you to your fathers’ (2 Ki 22:20; Jdg 2:10) or ‘slept with his fathers’ (2 Ki 13:13).’ The ‘gathering to the fathers’ at death in the verses presented by Craffert can also be interpreted as separate from burial in the place where the kings/fathers had been buried. Three of these verses refer to burial but always after the reference to being ‘gathered to the fathers,’ suggesting that this expression referred to death and not burial.

Sheol for the Israelites was a place where all their departed (the righteous – the justified, and the unrighteous – the unjustified) went and were together (but probably separated and in different conditions as suggested in the interpretation of Lk 16:23-26). So it was possible to talk of Israel as a community comprising the living and living dead. The universal church is the extension of the Old Testament people of God, the Israelites, and comprises all the deceased saints and all the living Christians. So Christians can speak of the living and the living dead as forming one community, the church. At the return of Christ this community, which is now effectively divided, will all receive their resurrection bodies and be united forever.

The Bible teaches the resurrection of the body, but not the resurrection of the spirit. This would indicate that the spirit does not need resurrection and hence lives on after death – the so-called immortality of the soul. That death is not extinction or annihilation is also suggested by the use of the metaphor of sleep to describe those who are dead. Entrance of demons into human bodies or animals (taking over their bodies) and departure from them, might provide

some helpful insights into the relationship of the human spirit to the human body, namely that the spirit inhabits and uses the body, though intricately fused with it, but at death leaves the body. Verses like Psalm 39:13, which talk of being no more after death, are more likely to refer to the end of life as experienced in this life and not annihilation.

In the Old Testament it is stated that Elijah and Enoch did not die, but were taken from this earth alive (Gn 5:24; Heb 11:5; 2 Ki 2:11). Perhaps this should be seen as a precursor of the resurrection from the dead or that the interim state involves a (temporary) body. Even if Enoch and Elijah left this earth in their bodies, this does not mean they retained them. Their bodies could have been transformed into bodies suitable for the intermediary state (see below).

#### 6.1.2 Relationship between the spirits of the departed

There is ‘a conscious existence during the intervening period [between death and resurrection]’ (Milne 1998:329; also Isa 14:9-11). The departed retain the same consciousness, identity, knowledge of others (perhaps even of others not known while on earth), and ability to communicate with one another (Isa 14:9-11; Lk 16: 22-23; Mk 12:26; Rev 6:9-10; Mk 9:2-7; Heb 9:27; Rev 20:11-13). Craffert (1999a:45) supports this position: ‘Death is rather seen as the continued existence of the person in an alternative mode. The dead are somehow believed to keep their human form’ (see below). If being with Christ is to be experienced as far better than life on earth as Paul says it is, the departed spirit must know Christ and be able to communicate with him. The superior situation after death for the believer would seem to imply a temporary body better than the one put off at death. Verses like Job 14:12 and Psalm 7:5 might appear to suggest that there is no consciousness in the after-life. But in the light of the great body of biblical evidence supporting life after death, these verses are better taken as referring to the corpse. The biblical evidence thus favours body and not soul sleep. Nyirongo (1997:106) states that ‘The soul is the whole of man’, which seems to be required if the dead are conscious and able to communicate, and especially if there is no interim body.

O’Donovan (1995:221) discusses 2 Corinthians 5:1-4, which covers death, possibly the intermediate state, and the Christian’s body after the resurrection. He sees this passage as indicating the spirits of the dead will be given a temporary body during the intermediate state

as Paul does not want to be unclothed after death. Alcorn (2005:57) agrees with this interpretation because he sees Scripture teaching that humans ‘are essentially as much physical as we are spiritual. We cannot be fully human without both a spirit *and* a body.’ Alcorn argues (:57-63) extensively and convincingly that while in the state between death and resurrection the deceased Christians are not bodiless. The writer feels that there are some significant differences between 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 and 1 Corinthians 15. The second passage does not seem to deal with the intermediate period/state and clearly shows that the resurrection body is only received when Christ returns (cf vv 23,51-52); in the former passage the interim period rather than the resurrection body seems to be in focus – Paul does not want to be without a body after death (vv 3-4) and the heavenly body is apparently already prepared for this purpose (vv 1-2,4). This supports O’Donovan and Alcorn’s position. If Christians possess a body during the intermediate period, it would mean one is only human when possessing a body. This might then explain why during the intermediate state there can be communication between the deceased and Christ. The bodily appearance of Moses and Elijah with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and their obvious interaction could support O’Donovan’s and Alcorn’s interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:1-4. Even if O’Donovan and Alcorn are correct, the fact that the resurrection of the body is the most momentous eschatological event for the body, the intermediate body must therefore lack the quality and capacity of the resurrection body needed to fully and perfectly experience human life; even unbelievers are resurrected before entering their eternal judgement, which suggests a resurrected body is needed to fully experience the eternal wrath of God (Dan 12:2; Isa 65:17; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 20:11-22:6; Blanchard 1993:43 notes that the term for the place of eternal judgement *Gehenna* includes the punishment of both body and soul). Therefore, for the Christian the intermediate state, with or without a temporary spiritual body, is clearly and essentially one of waiting for something greater. As Milne (1998:329) notes, though it is ‘far better’ for the believer to die and be with Christ, ‘it is not the full reality’; the tension ‘which the church experiences, caught between the two ages, exists also in some way for the dead.’

From a theological perspective the resurrection is the next event after death. Christ’s own resurrection defeats death, and follows soon after his death, setting the theological order and pattern for the believer. If it is also accepted that the apostles believed that the resurrection of the dead (and transformation of the living Christians) would be very soon, then it can be argued that the interim state was not on the radar screen of the New Testament writers. However, since many believers had died before Paul penned 2 Corinthians, he must have

thought about an interim period. Therefore, as noted above, since for Paul it is clear that for the Christian to die it is better by far than living in one's fallen body, it seems it would need to be concluded that a pre-resurrection body would be required, especially if a human spirit requires a body for full human expression as the resurrection of the body implies.

### 6.1.3 Relationship between the departed spirits and God

There are Old Testament verses that present life in sheol as a 'radical diminution' (Craffert 1999a:46), 'a virtual suspension of existence' (Kidner 1994:643), a way of living below the level of life on earth (Milne 1998:328). After death 'the dead person is counted among the shadows and the weak ones (Is 14)' (Craffert 1999a:45). Nürnberger (2007:59) sees sheol as a lifeless realm where one can 'no longer see the sun, enjoy life, or praise Yahweh.' Some verses state that God cannot be praised by the departed, and that they are cut off from his faithfulness (Isa 38:18-19; Ps 6:5; 88:5). In the light of the New Testament this would not apply to Old Testament saints and deceased Christians. They serve and worship God and Christ day and night in heaven according to the Book of Revelation. If the departed spirits of believers receive a temporary body during the intermediate state, communication with and praise of God would certainly be expected. The New Testament appears silent on whether or not there is any communication between God and the deceased non-Christians. As argued above, the interim state for believers is already one of judgement, but not final judgement which necessitates the resurrection of the body. This would imply limited or no contact with God as seems the reality after the resurrection (cf 'shut out from his presence', 2 Thes 1:9).

### 6.1.4 The activities of the departed spirits

#### 6.1.4.1 Rest

Some verses suggest that there will be no activity, only rest, in sheol (1 Ki 2:10; Job 3:13; Dan 12:13). Above it was noted that the deceased Christians worship God. But here in these Old Testament verses the inactivity or resting seems to be from all the other activities characteristic of earth, e.g. labour (Hebr 4:10; Rev 14:13; Jn 11:11-14; 1 Thes 4:13-15) (Milne 1998:329; also Chester 2006:144-145). Daniel 12:2 records that 'Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake.' This verse suggests that the activities of this life cease from death until the resurrection. The sleep metaphor for death does not necessarily mean

total passivity, as Milne (:329) notes: ‘it is worth noting that sleep could be a fairly significant occupation (Gn. 28:10-17; 41; Dn. 2; Mt. 1:20f.; 2:13).’ It is almost certain, therefore, that the sleep of death refers to the inactivity or stationary state of the corpse, rather than of the departed spirit (cf also Job 14:12 and Ps 7:5). When Samuel is called up from the after-life he seems upset that he had been disturbed (1 Sam 28:15), suggesting he was either resting from his earthly work and/or was involved in other serene and glorious activities in the heavenly paradise.

#### 6.1.4.2 Bliss or judgement

Job describes the place of the departed only in negative terms (10:20-22 and 26:5-6). This could either be a figurative way of describing death and the corpse, or more likely Job’s view of Sheol as a place of decreased existence or possibly of judgement. Lamentations 3:1-12 suggests that the dead are separated from God and live in darkness; the context suggests the darkness covers restricted movement, unanswered prayer, and judgement. Death in the Old Testament seems abnormal if premature (cf 2 Ki 21:1) and the result of personal sin (Job 24:19; 2 Sam 12). These views of death at a time when the resurrection of the dead was unknown, would explain why death and life after death in the Old Testament are viewed mostly negatively – something to be avoided at all costs and to be saved from (Pr 10:27; Ps 18:4-5; 30:3; 71:20; 69:1; 86:13; Isa 38:10). In the New Testament the departed saints enjoy a state of bliss (Lk 16:23-25; Phi 1:23; Rev 7:16-17), whereas the departed unbelievers experience punishment and pain (Lk 16:23-25) (see above). If progressive revelation in the Scriptures is granted, rather than conflicting and unrelated traditions juxtaposed, it can be concluded that the view of the afterlife developed towards the end of the Old Testament period (with hints before) to include a fuller understanding that embraced resurrection from the dead to either eternal judgement in hell or to full life and eternal rewards in a new earth of perfect bliss. Craffert (1999a:50) puts it this way: ‘For the first time in Judean literature one finds an alteration in how the realm of the dead is seen. Instead of Sheol as the everlasting residence of the dead, it becomes a pathway to something else’ – ‘a holding tank for the dead prior to resurrection’ (Craffert 1999a:50).

As noted above, O’Donovan and Alcorn argue for three bodies, not only two: the one in this life, one for the intermediate period, and the resurrection one. Paul strongly states that he does not wish to be unclothed, i.e. to be without a body. If this state of being unclothed describes

the intermediate state, this state cannot be pleasant or desirable. Could it be that such a state is pictured by Job after death? So then Job might not be envisioning judgement for sin committed in this life, but rather a totally inferior state of being that is experienced by a person without a body. As noted above, there 'is more than a hint in the OT that life beyond the grave is less substantial than that experienced by us here and now (cf. Jb. 7:9f.; 10:20f.; Pss. 6:5; 30:9)' (Milne 1998:328). This would support the idea that human existence is only fully possible when the human spirit and a body are fused (inextricably interlinked).

#### 6.1.4.3 Relationship between the dead and the living

Many arguments against a relationship of the living with their ancestors have been presented. Nürnberger (2007:59) concludes from the Old Testament that 'Forebears could do nothing for their offspring and their offspring could do nothing for them. Death was the end of all relationships' (Job 7:9-10 is emphatic that the dead person 'does not return' to this life which does not seem limited to returning in a physical body). When God wanted to communicate a message to his servants in Israel he spoke directly or sent angels and not the deceased. If the position that the dead do not contact the living is rigidly adhered to, the account of Saul interacting with Samuel after his death would then have to be treated as deception (see below). Paul longed to die in order to be with Christ; but there was also a longing to remain alive as this is the only way he could help the Philippian church. Nürnberger (:86) deduces from this that there is no mediating role of the deceased and no contact between the living and their deceased. In 2 Peter 1:13-15 the same argument is given: Peter writes his letter because once dead he would have no further contact with his readers. Nürnberger (:85-89) deals with other arguments from the New Testament to support this conclusion. Brown (2000:12) notes from the Lazarus incident that 'Those physically dead cannot help the living even if someone rose from the dead.' There are a number of angelic appearances in human form (Gn 19:1-2; Lk 1:11; Heb 13:2), some of which could mistakenly be taken as ancestral visitation. Jesus' appearances to his disciples after his death was in his resurrection body, which is not the same as visiting them as a departed spirit (cf Jn 20:26 and Lk 24:13-34). On the mountain of transfiguration Moses and Elijah appear and speak to Jesus, whose face changed and whose clothes became brilliantly bright. This could be taken as a truly rare incident; further, it appears Moses and Elijah have no interaction with the disciples. The voice, God's voice, from the cloud explains the theological significance of the appearance of Moses and Elijah and

their conversation with Jesus, the real purpose of the visitation. Further, this event is not an example of ancestors communicating with their immediate descendants.

The nearest the Bible comes to a close relationship with the living dead is the strong emphasis in the Old Testament on the Israelites' genealogies, and the exhortation in the New Testament to remember one's deceased leaders' good deeds and sincere faith and imitate them (Hebr 13:7). As Nürnberger (2004:84) notes, 'Ancestors as such are insignificant for the redemptive purposes of the biblical God, except as role models of faith.' Nürnberger (:88) notes that the Israelites 'remembered their prime ancestors only as the point in time when God entered into a relationship with Israel.' He (:75) also states that memory of the ancestors in the Old Testament 'reassured the Israelites of Yahweh's ongoing commitment.' Christians rather than being told not to offend or grieve their deceased in order to avoid their retribution, are told not to offend or grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30). The 'cloud of witnesses' in Hebrews 12:1 refers to the Old Testament saints mentioned in Hebrews 11. But this reference almost certainly does not imply that these ancestors can literally exercise an influence in the Christian's life. Their stories of faith in times of suffering and death are provided as inspiration to the readers to continue in the Christian faith in times of strong opposition. Nowhere in Scripture are Christians told to seek contact with and help from ancestors, fear them, offer gifts or sacrifices or prayers to them, i.e. to venerate or worship them. The Bible does not present the ancestors as having authority over the living to bless or judge, to exercise a benevolent influence or send reprisals if not remembered or honoured or if their traditions are not adhered to. Even the great Jewish ancestors Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Samuel and many others, are not over God's people (God's house), i.e. do not rule God's people because only God and his son have this function (Hebr 3:6; Eph 1:18-22; Col 1:15-17; Phi 2:9). Nürnberger (2004:61) concludes that in the New Testament the African stress on ancestors is absent: 'We have to come to terms with the fact that there is no trace of ancestor veneration in either the Old or the New Testament' (Nürnberger 2007:105). Nürnberger (:89) states that 'it would seem that the discourse about the present place and function of the deceased – whether saints or ancestors – lies outside the horizons of the New Testament.' Before deciding on the implications of this apparent silence, the arguments for a relationship between the ancestors and their immediate offspring and other matters will be discussed.

Burnett (2000:70) concludes from his study of the afterlife that 'the Bible leaves open the question of whether the dead may communicate with the living.' Williams (1992:5) states that



‘the Bible never denies that possibility.’ It has been noted that there are a few biblical cases of contact between the living and the departed: Samuel apparently appeared to Saul; Moses and Elijah appeared before three of Jesus’ disciples; and Jesus appeared to Saul (Paul). O’Donovan (1995:224) sees Samuel’s appearance to Saul as genuine. Burnett (2000:69-70) also argues in favour of Samuel’s appearance being real: ‘the medium was surprised that Samuel actually rose from the dead. Her surprise seems to have been from the unusual nature of this occurrence, as she was more used to using trickery and personal insights in her role as a medium.’ The shock of the medium when Samuel appeared was rather because she realized that her client was Saul who had declared mediums to be killed. Or as Anderson (2004:1) states, ‘when she sees Samuel she screams as she also sees through Saul’s disguise’. Interestingly, Samuel’s appearance did not alter God’s planned judgement on Saul and his family – in other words it changed nothing. Burnett (2000:70) admits that the transfiguration appearances were unique, but that ‘they do not discount the possibility of ghosts [departed spirits].’ In the account of the rich man and Lazarus ‘A careful reading shows that Abraham does not tell the rich man it is impossible for the dead to return, but that it is spiritually useless’ (Burnett 2000:69). Craffert (1999a:34) deduces from the many prohibitions on contacting the dead in the Old Testament (cf Isa 8:18-20, Lev 19:26-31, Deut 14:1 and 18:10-11) that Israel was ‘engaging in inter-action with the dead’, and that this practice was ‘indeed very popular among the Israelites’ and therefore possible. Or as Anderson (2004:1) puts it, ‘We must remember God forbids Israel to use divination not because it does not work but because it is wicked.’ Brown (2000:13) notes that there are other verses indicating Israel and certain members of the church at times practiced contact with the dead with occultic associations: 1 Ki 11:5-6; 2 Ki 9:22,27; 23:10; 23:24; 1 Chr 10:13-14; 2 Chr 33:1-10’ Isa 2:6; 8:19-20; 19:3-4; Mic 5:1,12; Acts 8:9-13,20-24; 13:8-11; Gal 5:20. He (:38) also concludes from 2 Samuel 18:18 that Absalom, because he had no son, ‘took proper measures in order to ensure that regular rites of commemoration would be performed after his death’, showing ‘that ancestors were important in Israelite tradition.’ In this verse it is recorded that Absalom built a pillar to be remembered by after his death, and therefore contrary to Brown this might have nothing to do with an actual ancestral cult. There is a reference to a funeral fire in honour of the dead person in a few places (Jer 34:5; 2 Chr 16:14; 21:19). Here too some might see the evidence of ancestral veneration to facilitate later beneficial contact between the living and the dead. In the light of verses forbidding necromancy and those suggesting Israel did get involved, it could therefore be argued that contacting God through ancestors was possible but unnecessary as the Israelites had a ‘direct and personal relationship with

Yahweh' (Nürnberg 2007:59; also Williams 1992:10). 'It is forbidden, because we have something far better. ... the Word of God and in particular the Lord Jesus Christ' (Anderson 2004:2). Williams (1992:10) feels 'that ancestral help may be real. Like some modern drugs, however, help is possible but may have dangerous side effects.' The issue then would be 'whether such revelation must be acted on, thus whether they [the ancestors] can demand the obedience which can only be given to God' (Williams 1992:17). Though Williams (2008:4') sees communication of the unsaved living-dead with their unconverted living as impossible from Luke 16, he 'wonders if it is a possibility for those in Christ, which would be by virtue of a relationship with him' but which he regards as 'Rather speculative.' It appears, therefore, that there are a number of arguments in favour of the possibility of interaction between the living and the living-dead. However, it can be argued that though this is a possibility it was rare and therefore an exception and unique (Burnett 2000:70; O'Donovan 1995:224) and not to be pursued. Samuel's appearance to Saul and certain other verses indicate that the dead cannot change things for the living through contact with them or cannot (except rarely) visit the living.

If contact with the dead usually involves contact with demons under the guise of ancestors (see above), this is a powerful argument against the living trying to communicate with the dead. The above treatment of the kingdom of Satan shows why this possibility deserves careful attention. This would not be an argument for or against the living being able to contact the dead. Nyirongo (1997:87) sees deception in Saul's case: 'Serious Bible students perceive Samuel's appearance from the dead as a demon's masquerade.' Since Satan is a master of lies (Jn 8:44), craftily deceptive (2 Cor 2:11), and head of the demons, it can be concluded that demons are characterized by the same lying and deceiving character. The Old Testament and New Testament do in fact refer to lying demons/spirits (1 Ki 22:22; 1 Tim 4:1; 1 Jn 4:6), deceiving demonic miracles (2 Thes 2:9; Rev 16:13-14), and demons that promote false teaching (1 Tim 4:1). Attempting to contact the departed spirits presents Satan and his demons with the ideal opportunity for deception by posing as ancestors (Williams 1992:10). This kind of deception is recorded in 2 Corinthians 11:3,14-15: Satan's practice of impersonating even an angel of light and deceiving spirits presenting as 'servants of righteousness' (v 15). The kingdom of Satan is capable of miracles, and this would mean that Satan and his subject demons could impersonate ancestors with amazing accuracy and effectiveness if they so chose. Evangelicals would attribute ATR's ignorance of spiritual deception to (i) the devil working incognito which 'is one of the cleverest tricks in his bag'

(Unger 1981:12), and (ii) to ATR's adherents' sinful nature that would 'choose to believe the devil's lies instead of the Lord's truth' (Smith nd:10). Some reasons why demons would want to impersonate ancestors would be to keep 'many people from a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ' (O'Donovan 1995:222), to 'open themselves up to deception by demons' (:225), and to 'increase the deception of non-Christian religions which lead men to trust in ancestors or other spirits instead of trusting in Christ' (:224). The reasons for such deception then would be, firstly, the demons' evil character, secondly, the hatred Satan bears against God and his image-bearers, thirdly, Satan's desire to usurp God and be worshiped, and, fourthly, the beliefs about the ancestors push God and Christ into the background and allow Satan and his demons (presenting as ancestors) to dominate the living instead of God.

The evidence amassed for the possibility of contact with the dead cannot be ignored. The possibility and probability of demons having infiltrated and taken over the ancestral cult is taken seriously by the writer. This would largely explain the negative impact of the ancestral cult on a close relationship with God and on development in the widest sense (including economic). It would also partly explain why the West, which has generally not believed in demons, has no ancestor visitation (except in the case of those people seeking it through traditional or occultic methods), because if the ancestors were active in the affairs of their descendents this would have been made clearly known by the ancestors to those living in the West during the last ten or more centuries. It is also noteworthy that demonic activity is outwardly rife among traditional societies that practice some form of the ancestral cult. This is a powerful argument in favour of Satan's involvement in the cult.

Alcorn (2005:68-69) argues that heaven's inhabitants remember life on earth, see what is happening on earth (:69-71), and pray for those still on earth (71-72). This, however, does not imply the dead contact the living. Such a view of the Christian deceased throws new light on Hebrews 11. This Chapter then 'echoes the powerful African traditional idea that our ancestors are ever present in spite of their having passed on to the spiritual realm' (Pollard 1995:30). However, this is not equating Alcorn's view with the ancestral cult. Alcorn's understanding of the saints now in heaven could easily be taken to justify the ancestral cult if not handled circumspectly. The arguments against the ancestors playing an active part in the lives of the saints on earth are overwhelming for the evangelical.

Brain ([Online]) notes that the superior status of ancestors over the living is dependent ‘upon the goodwill and remembrance of the living.’ This suggests that the ancestors do not have the power they are thought to have in ATR. Badiako (1990:38-42)) argues that intellectually-speaking, the cult of the ancestors ‘belongs to the category of myth, ancestors being the product of the myth-making imagination of the community’ (:39). He sees this phenomenon as stemming from the African stress on community that links the living and the departed in a common life, and from ‘a projection into the transcendent realm of the social values and spiritual expectations of the living community’ (:38). The ancestral cult secures ‘the conditions upon which the life and continuity of the community are believed to depend’ (:39). The ‘potency of the cult of ancestors is *not* the potency of the ancestors themselves; the potency of the cult is the potency of myth’ (:40). The persistence of the cult is not due to the ancestors’ demonstrable power to act (:41). To add weight to his view Bediako (:41) states ‘that ancestral spirits as human spirits which have not demonstrated any power over death, the final enemy, cannot be presumed to act in the way tradition ascribes to them.’ This does not mean he disbelieves in any spirit activity in ATR: ‘indeed spiritual forces do operate here’ (:41). Bediako does not touch on the strong likelihood of demons masquerading as ancestors. It is not enough to see the ancestral cult as myth with no basis in fact and leave the obvious spirit activity associated with the cult unaccounted for.

#### 6.1.5 Offering sacrifices and food to the ancestors

The offerings of animals and food offerings in the Old Testament are no longer to be offered since the coming of Christ. Now only praise and the Christian’s life and service are to be offered. In the Old Testament food was not to be offered to the dead (Dt 26:14). In the New Testament no offerings are made to the deceased/ancestors.

#### 6.2 Comparison with ATR

Firstly the similarities. As with ATR, Christians believe in the living dead, and God’s people comprise both the living and the living dead. Further, in both ATR and Christianity the living are encouraged to remember and imitate their dead (in the case of Christianity only those deceased whose lives were exemplary). Taylor (cited in Williams 1992:63) states that Africans have noted that ‘the Old Testament is also important as a book of remembrance of ancestors.’ Some evangelicals, as noted above, can accommodate from their study of the

Bible that contact with ancestors is possible, though definitely forbidden. These similarities are highly significant and Christian leaders need to capitalize on them in Christian discipleship in Africa. This is especially so with the ancestral cult as it is the heart of Africanism, and therefore the most difficult to bring in line with biblical teaching. The similarities provide an ideal bridge from ATR to Christianity.

The differences are numerous and significant. Christians are not to contact the dead for any reason. Setiloane (2000:29) is amazed that Christians who believe in life after death seek ‘categorically to deny any point of contact between the living and the dead.’ It does not seem necessarily logical that existence of the spirit after death should imply contact between the living and the living dead – after all they are in different realms and openness to contact with the invisible world opens one to deception by Satan’s kingdom. Daneel (cited in Williams 1992:8) notes that ‘Others see dealing with the ancestors as positively commanded in the fifth commandment.’ The writer does not see how this commandment would imply seeking contact with one’s ancestors, especially as this commandment focuses on this life.

It was noted above that probably most evangelical Christians would explain the body of evidence for ancestors, or most of it, in terms of demonic impersonation. Nyirongo (1997:79) has come to the conclusion that the African’s claim of contact between the living and the ancestors and the ancestors’ providential role ‘are nothing else but illusions.’ It was noted above that Bediako treats the ancestral cult as myth. Nyirongo is, however, not denying spirit activity in the ancestral cult, but just that it is not the ancestors, but rather demons that ‘masquerade as ancestors’ (:87) that are active. This position or Bediako’s on the ancestral cult is a terribly bitter pill for Africans to swallow. Thus the recognition that ancestors apparently can be contacted is the preferable way to approach the African convert on the matter of ancestors and the biblical details.

If there were no such beings as demons (evil spirits), ATR beliefs about the ancestors would be more plausible. But even ATR acknowledges that evil spirits exist. It seems strange that the anti-God stance and powers of deception of demons are not taken more seriously in ATR. The only activity ATR focuses on is the demons’ powers to harm people through witchcraft. As noted above, if Satan impersonates angels and he and his demons impersonate godly people, why would he and his kingdom of demons not impersonate ancestors, especially if this would lead the living to alienation from God and his Son and their authority and word

and allegiance to Satan's kingdom? Further, if the Bible is correct that Satan hates the human race and seeks its destruction (Jn 10:10; 1 Pet 5:8; Eph 6:16), he would want to frustrate, hold back, lead astray, ruin and even kill humans with his army of demons. Is Africa not a good example of a destructive spiritual third force at work? This would help to at least partly explain its rapacious, tyrant leaders, endless destructive conflict, woeful economic problems, shocking poverty, pervasive corruption, high unemployment, gross lack of progress, rampant and pandemic diseases, high death-rate, and in many parts a paralyzing hopelessness. The West has its own catalogue of experiences and problems due to Satan as does every country. Satan is subtle and no doubt adapts his strategies to ensure success in every situation, whether animistic, polytheistic, theistic or atheistic. His strategy in modernism was to work incognito and invisibly as if he did not exist, which fuelled a rejection of the spirit world, including God, and a resulting increase in godlessness and unrighteousness, all outcomes in keeping with Satan's evil kingdom and animosity towards God.

It has been noted that it is significant that countries outside of Africa made great progress when their ancestral cults were weakened and discarded. South Korea is a good example. Dr Kim from South Korea, a previous lecturer at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape where the writer worked for many years, attributes the rapid rise to first-world status of South Korea to a frenzied work ethic, amazing growth of evangelical Christianity, and the concomitant weakening or rejection of the ancestral cult. Today nearly 30% of the population is thought to be evangelical. Slavery, the missionaries, colonialism, aspects of world trade, and the policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank do not fully account for Africa's chronic lack of development and its many other troubles. It must be asked how is it possible for Africa to have appalling governments, widespread corruption, endless wars, and an HIV/AIDS pandemic, lazy civil servants, lack of initiative, sexual promiscuity and children conceived out of wedlock, when in many countries about 75% of the population professes to be Christian. Even a cursory reading of the New Testament reveals that the ethics of true Christianity would produce the best foundation in a country for sound morality, unity, peace and progress. The writer therefore believes it is largely because the greater majority of the Christians in Africa were either never converted or were not properly disciplined in the faith and are largely in the grip of the ancestral cult that Africa is in its present condition. This conviction motivated the writer to embark on a research project aimed at helping release the full power of Christianity in the African continent.

Burnett (2000:106) notes that 'in most societies people often feel they need to draw upon additional resources from some non-empirical source, and so often turn to some means of divination.' The writer of this dissertation recently traveled by bus and was joined on the journey by a famous astrologer, and was amazed at how eager the passengers were for his services of fortune-telling. This confirmed the ease with which Satan could lead many astray from God if they seek wisdom, aid and power from the non-physical realm. The television programmes *Crossing Over* and *Making Contact* were very popular and reflect how people need help in coping with death, especially of family and other loved-ones: 'The letting go of loved ones to the world beyond is something too threatening for them, and so they find great comfort in maintaining what they think is a link with them after death' (Anderson 2004:1). Once again, the meeting of this need through necromancy sets up Satan with a marvelous opportunity for deception and leading people astray from God and the Bible.

Most, if not all, witch-doctors are motivated by a genuine desire to want to heal and protect people in the community, and their method is the one they were trained in - primarily the ancestral cult. But motives and wishes marked by integrity clearly are not a guarantee that the methods used are acceptable to the evangelical Christian. If the method is forbidden in the Bible it is out of bounds for evangelicals. The evangelical sees much Satanic deception in the ancestral cult. If this conclusion is correct, the cult practitioners in ATR are caught in the devil's web of deception. More research is needed on the highly probable connection between the ancestral cult and the kingdom of Satan in the light of biblical and practical evidence.

If African Christians reject those aspects of ATR concerning the ancestors that contradict Christianity, they are accused of denying their Africanness. Ngada and Mofokeng (2001:30) state that African Initiated Churches 'do not forbid the traditional rites. ... It is impossible to separate an African from her or his culture.' This position means that for Africans to reject any African customs, especially those of the ancestral cult, they are rejecting their Africanness. Does this mean that evangelicals working in Africa with their belief that anything contrary to the Gospel must be jettisoned are asking converts to reject their Africanness? It seems an exaggeration when black scholars accuse African evangelicals of turning their backs on everything African. It appears to be rather a subtle strategy to make Christianity look belittling of everything African and to keep all traditional customs alive in order to unite Africans in a common identity and stand against Western cultural and economic imperialism. The next Chapter of this dissertation will explore the issue of Christianity's

relationship to culture and whether one can in all honesty talk of an African evangelical. Nevertheless, as noted above, it has to be admitted that to dismantle the perceived role of the ancestors precipitates ‘distress to the inner soul of many Africans’ (Gehman 1989:177). It is no wonder that many African Christians ‘resort to the traditional customs regarding ancestral spirits,’ that many non-Christian Africans ‘remain outside the faith,’ that various African Independent Churches have ‘restored some of the traditional ways,’ and that ‘African theologians ... are addressing this question’ (Gehman 1989:178). For anyone claiming to be an African and an evangelical, these issues will have to be faced in the light of the Christian worldview and New Testament and satisfactorily resolved. This is the key area of discipleship in Africa that needs careful attention and tactful, sensitive application of biblical solutions (this is tackled in Chapters 5 and 6).

In the light of Section 6 of this Chapter, evangelicals can come to no other conclusion than that ‘Traditional African belief in the ancestral spirits is one of those items in ATR which is ... incompatible with the Christian faith’ (Gehman 1989:185). Therefore the relative silence in the New Testament about the place and function of the deceased does not mean the New Testament is open to further revelation on these matters from other sources like ATR. The evangelical’s view of Scripture prevents this. Perhaps the main reason for the prohibition of the ancestral cult is its detraction from seeking God directly in all situations, especially ones of crisis, need, danger and fear. Verse 3 of Isaiah Chapter 19 is found in the midst of a prophecy of judgement on Egypt: Egypt will face political and military destabilization, war and defeat. It is in this situation that the Egyptians will consult the dead, showing how the ancestral cult subordinates God to the ancestors. African evangelicals can be comforted in the knowledge that God would not forbid a practice if it was harmless and beneficial and if without it the Christian would be vulnerable to evil spirit attacks.

The writer went through an over zealous stage early in his Christian experience and was taken up during this period with the belief that demonic activity was behind a Christian’s unsuccessful struggle with any temptation or insoluble problem. He and a few close Christian friends were trained in every aspect of demonology based on much speculation from the New Testament accounts of countering demonic attacks, especially during the ministry of Jesus. It was most noteworthy that while the writer and the others were caught up in the power, strategies, antics and exorcisms of demons there appeared to be endless and mostly genuine demonic manifestations. Also it was found that Christians counseled by them did not take



responsibility for their role in their spiritual and other problems. Eventually the writer perceived how unbalanced and unhelpful his spirituality and ministry had become and terminated his triumphalism with regard to overcoming the kingdom of Satan and the blaming of demons for all spiritual failure. Most interestingly, when this decision was made and a refocus on the Lordship and preeminence of Christ was instituted, suddenly all the manifestations disappeared revealing that the less attention Satan is given the less effective his kingdom is. The writer also found he had much more time for other more productive ministries and achieved greater spiritual growth marked by more personal responsibility for his spiritual development. The first world countries are evidence to the broad-based development that follows the rejection of and distancing from the ancestral cult and thus the demonic activity that goes with it.

If the dead were intended to be contacted the Bible would have endorsed it, and surely the detailed ceremonies and conditions for contact with them in ATR would not have been necessary. Clearly according to the Bible death is meant to be separation so that the reality of the seriousness of sin might be pondered and not missed. 'Death remains the stark proof of sin, the result of the curse, the evidence of the divine indictment under which the race stands' (Carson 1084:152). The ancestral cult therefore must in part be seen as a deliberate endeavour to weaken the impact of death as ultimately God's judgement on sinners. Death is rather meant to stir seeking God, not deceased relatives, through repentance and faith. Because the living are not supposed to attempt contact with the dead, and because the spirit realm is so mysterious, it is a simple matter for Satan to capitalize on humans' rebellion against God reflected in their trying to overcome the effects of death by attempting to communicate with the deceased. There is no easier situation for deception by evil spirits than attempting communication with the spirit world.

Finally it needs to be noted that it is not enough to prove that the ancestral cult is mostly not genuine and that therefore ancestors cannot harm one. The African Christian also needs to be equipped to deal with the very real demonic side of the ancestral cult.

Chapter 6 considers the important implications for discipleship of the evangelical convert in Christianity's beliefs about the spirits of the dead and the other spirits, especially in understanding and defining Africanness/Africanicity.

## 7. Conclusion to the chapter

The writer of this dissertation does not believe that Africa's cultures makes Africans inferior to Western peoples (see Chapter 5). Africans and Westerners and any other people in the world occupy essentially the same position if they lack the knowledge or acceptance of the Bible and its gospel. This means every Christian throughout the world was in a similar position to the non-Christian African prior to believing the Gospel. In fact, according to evangelicals, traditional African beliefs are closer to the Bible, especially about God and the spirit world, than Western secularism or Asian cosmology. Chapter 4 has investigated and interrogated ATR and to a lesser degree Christianity. The purpose has not been to humiliate ATR and vindicate Christianity. The real motive has been to pave the way for the development of a more effective approach to discipleship in the African evangelical churches.

It has been demonstrated that there are many areas of overlap between ATR and Christianity, but also areas of major difference. To appreciate this contrast evangelicals need to thoroughly and unemotionally study ATR and Christianity. This is necessary for the similarities and dissimilarities to be fairly and correctly delineated. The similarities in worldview are striking, especially the influence of the spirit world (including God) on the living and their world. In evangelism and discipleship the similarities need to be acknowledged and emphasized, especially as they provide a common point of contact and a bridge between ATR and Christianity. The differences need to be faced and converts equipped to purify ATR so that syncretism is avoided. If evangelism and church planting by missionaries and other Westerners during the last two centuries had been true to the Gospel and culture, Africa would have been much further along the road of spiritual and other development (see Chapters 5 and 6).

The **similarities** are attributed by evangelical Christians to general/natural revelation. Burnett (2000:33) refers to Mbiti's studies of the idea of God in three hundred African languages, and his conclusion that right across the continent every group, independently of the others, has a concept of the one Supreme Being/God. Gehman (1989:250, 268) correctly reminds us that 'the Bible recognizes the witness of God among the non-Christians through revelation in nature and conscience', and therefore there 'must ... be some measure of continuity ... [and] the existence of similarities should not be surprising.' Pobee (1979:72-80) discusses a number

of Scriptures to show ‘that it is possible to work from nature backwards to God’ (1987:72) (cf Mt 6:26-30, Rom 1:19-20, Heb 1:1-2, Acts 14:15-17, 17:24-28,31 and Rom 2:14-15). Nyirongo (1997:12-13) deals with a number of other verses and demonstrates that it cannot be denied that ‘God revealed Himself to the pre-Christian African generations’ (:16). McGrath (2007:159-170) provides a brief but helpful discussion of natural revelation throughout church history. Every Christian tradition supports the belief that some knowledge of God is gained through his creation. God’s creation bears ‘the mark of the divine handiwork’ (:164). The centuries of Christian reflection on this matter have concluded that God is to be found through ‘human reason, the ordering of the world, and the beauty of the world’ (:164). It needs to be noted that a Christian minority has critiqued this majority view and has either watered it down or rejected it (:165-170). Kumar (1979:61) after considering whether the Old Testament revelation drew on elements from other cultures, concludes that ‘God did indeed speak in the context [Israel’s neighbours] and employed elements of the content of the surrounding cultures in order to convey his message to his ancient people.’

This Chapter has also clearly shown that Christianity is far more detailed and extensive than ATR. Some evangelicals, including the writer, see this as indicating that Christianity is both an advancement on and correction of ATR and therefore ATR is a kind of *preparatio evangelica* (Gehman 1989:268). Williams (1993:1) concludes from the growth in Africa of Islam and Christianity that ATR (especially the ancestral cult) is inadequate and incomplete. Parratt (1987:104) sees the positive religious values of his tribal religion as coming from the same source as Christianity, and which ‘indeed look forward to the refining of their distorted human elements. These values we may call ‘points of contact’ or ‘starting points’, which will find their completion in the Christian religion.’ Evangelicals would limit the ‘source’ of ATR to natural revelation, but a distorted version due to the influence of the sinful nature. Williams (1992:1) shows ‘that African needs are fully met in Christ’ and, therefore, ‘Christian belief in many cases fulfils what traditional belief attempts to do’ (:17). Jesus fulfils the African’s ‘deep spiritual longings’ (Citari 1982:216) and ‘the highest religious and cultural aspirations’ (Bediako 1990:6). Evangelicals have ‘a firm conviction that in and through Christ, we have found and been found by, ultimate truth, which is utterly dependable for interpreting our human experience’ (Bediako 1990:30). This approach to ATR as preparation for Christianity is seen in the fact that Christianity has spread most rapidly in societies with religious systems akin to ATR (:7). Mbiti (1969:227) considers traditional religion as ‘preparatory and even essential ground in the search for the Ultimate. But only Christianity has the terrible

responsibility of pointing the way to that ultimate Identity, Foundation and Source of security.’ This indicates that the missionaries’ rejection of all, or most, of Africa’s worldview and cultures was wrong. They failed to appreciate (i) natural revelation, allowing for some distortion due to the sinful nature, and (ii) the universal common role of culture (see Chapter 5).

This Chapter has also highlighted that there are many undeniable and serious **differences** between ATR and Christianity. Because of the evangelical’s understanding of the Scriptures as final spiritual truth, the differences cannot be treated as of no consequence. Rather, all religions must be judged by the biblical standard of truth, including their ethical systems, because the Bible is the benchmark for all religions and all behaviour. The evangelicals’ position on Scripture means they have to disagree with those who believe Christianity is just another route to God (see Chapter 2), or that other religious beliefs and customs are equal in authority to those of Christianity’s (see Nyirongo 1997:1-5). So evangelicals reject the pluralistic view that all religions are on a par. It must, however, be stressed again that the evangelicals’ approach to other religions does not result from a desire to arbitrarily declare Christianity superior to them. ATR does not approach other religions as Christianity does. ATR respects every group’s religion as being right for that group (cf postmodernism). This attitude and the whites’ superiority in development and supposedly in culture made it easier for Africans to adopt the missionaries’ religion and even their culture alongside their own traditional beliefs resulting in syncretism. It is very confusing and even offensive to many Africans today that Christianity, considered a Western or white people’s religion, is promoted and embraced in Africa which has its own religious views and customs. The challenge, therefore, facing leaders in the Evangelical Church in Africa is, firstly, to start with general revelation to show the origin of ATR, and secondly, to show how Christianity as special revelation leads on from ATR as correction, extension and fulfilment of ATR. Nyirongo (1997:23) notes the insufficiency of natural revelation when he writes: ‘On its own God’s revelation in nature could not enable Abraham to know God and His will.’ Natural revelation ‘does not provide the same depth of knowledge of God that special revelation provides through the Scriptures’ (Kasali 2006:1354). Clearly special revelation is needed. But this Chapter has demonstrated that this needs to go hand-in-hand with a proper understanding of ATR and the Gospel and the role of culture (see more on culture in Chapter 5).

Nyirongo (1997:18) notes that the influence of fallen nature and the satanic kingdom leads one to distort natural revelation and develop one's own religion: 'When man persistently suppresses God's revelation he becomes spiritually blind and deludes himself into believing that he trusts and worships the true God.' Bavinck (cited in Gehman 1989:257) bluntly describes the effects of sin on general revelation: 'Heathenism [it could describe much of Westernism] is nothing else but changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man. It is worshipping and serving the creature. It is rebellion against the Creator.'

The significant differences between Christianity and ATR indicate that ATR is not unambiguously preparatory for the Christian faith – there is a basic discontinuity (cf Gehman 1989:257-258 for personal testimonies of evangelical Africans to this effect). Preskett and Ramachandra (2003:66) note that proponents of religious pluralism don't seem to consult those who have converted from their religion to Christianity: 'It would be odd if their discussions of who should or should not turn ... were not at all influenced by those who have actually responded to the invitation, and have found in doing so the liberation they sought.' But this does not mean that much in African traditions is not valuable (cf Gehman 1989:258). But it does mean '[evangelical African Christians] do not "feel" positive toward their traditional religion as a whole' (Gehman 1989:258). Pobee (1987:73-74, 78-80) shows that those aspects of the Old Testament revelation that were fulfilled with the coming of Christ, are no longer valid. This provides another reason why 'there is no going back to other approaches now, even if through other faiths, some true knowledge of God has been vouchsafed' (:73). This position flows from the evangelical's belief in progressive revelation climaxing in the New Covenant, beyond which there is no further Gospel revelation. This position implies the Christian revelation overrides all other religions where they differ from the Christian revelation (Heb 1:1-4). Mndende (2006:155) does not miss this point: Africans are being made to 'accept that it [African Religion] is lower than Christianity' and that 'one is seen as spiritually incomplete'.

As noted above, because the evangelical believes the Bible to be an infallible revelation and Christianity the fulfilment, climax and completion of the Old Testament, Christianity does not allow for religious syncretism which attempts 'to unite together those elements which are incompatible ... to unite, harmonize or fuse together the diverse beliefs of one religion with the conflicting beliefs of another' (Gehman 1989:271, 272). Syncretism is a threat to

Christianity because it ‘is the denial of any unique revelation or exclusive faith’ (:271). In the Old Testament ‘Compromise in the form of syncretism ... resulted in the wrath of God’ (:275). Gehman (:276-279) notes that in the New Testament the apostles acted emphatically against syncretism, and illustrates this from how the danger of syncretism at Ephesus was handled (Acts 19): ‘When the Ephesians responded to the Gospel and became Christians, they made a total break with magic.’ It has been noted above that many African Christians are syncretistic in their faith. Speaking of his research in Zimbabwe, Manley (2006:178) states, ‘With the exception of some AIC members, my respondents did not feel the dual allegiance was contradictory.’ ‘By and large Christianity was seen as a complementary rather than a rival form of spirituality ... After all, many of them told me, the God of the Bible and the God of the ancestors are one and the same’ (:178). Mndende (2006:154) sees correctly that this entails double standards: ‘ ... when they are with their clans they say the ancestors are the intermediaries between them and God, and when in the church they say Jesus is the intermediary.’ Evangelicals in Africa need to face the pandemic of syncretism in their midst and the great cost to the churches and Africa’s development.

‘Syncretism thrives on biblical illiteracy’ (Gehman 1989:283). The challenge, therefore, to the Evangelical Church in Africa is to thoroughly disciple the converts in the Christian faith: ‘Vital and relevant biblical instruction is essential to help the spiritual infant grow, develop and mature in accordance with God’s Word’; and this can only be provided by ‘A strong, spirit-filled, biblically trained national leadership’ (Gehman 1989:282, 283).

Mndende (2005:156) interprets Christian mission as ‘the oppression of African Religion by Christianity.’ Evangelicals do not see mission as oppression, but as a necessary editing, purifying, expansion and fulfilment of African Religion. Chapters 5 and 6 will investigate how this avoidance of syncretism in Africa relates to the question of whether African evangelicals are no longer African. This takes the dissertation into an investigation of the place of culture in one’s humanity, self-identity and Christian life.

Evangelicals are gravely concerned about syncretism, especially that form that ends up with no Gospel. A person professing to be a Christian without the Gospel is not a Christian according to evangelicals. Nyirongo (1997:1) captures these matters: ‘there are fundamental truths where God has given full light and expects all those who claim to be Christians to

believe them without reserve. Failure to do so would make such a claim pointless or self-deceptive' (:1). Introspection is called for in the African evangelical churches (cf 2 Cor 13:5).

Chapter 4 has shown another area where Christian discipleship in Africa is vital, namely the teaching of Christian doctrines so that they take root in the converts' lives and prevent syncretism. Clearly for this to be achieved discipleship must lead to a thorough understanding of Christianity and ATR, the similarities and differences, why there are differences, that ATR is a kind of *preparatio evangelica* for the Gospel, and that Christianity is the extension, purifier and fulfilment of ATR. Mbiti (cited in Stoltz 2006:13) sums up this position: 'African Religion ... has been a valuable and indispensable lamp on the spiritual path. But, ... it cannot be made a substitute for the eternal gospel which is like the sun that brilliantly illuminates the path ... The gospel has come to fulfil and complete African religiosity.'

## **Culture, identity and Gospel**

In Chapters 2 and 4 of this dissertation the powerful, profound influence of Christianity on the Christian's lifestyle was noted. This raises the question of the relationship of Christianity to culture (including worldview) and human/group/cultural identity. This matter has come up a number of times in the dissertation so far and is now taken up in a systematic presentation. This Chapter explores whether it is relevant to discipleship in the Evangelical Church in Africa (and by implication the evangelical churches outside Africa). This Chapter analyses the nature of culture and its relationship to human identity. It also looks at how one's identity and culture are affected by Christianity. This is done primarily through a study of Jewish and Gentile Christians during the New Testament period. It includes how Christians should relate to Christians of another ethnic group and culture; also how Christians should relate to non-Christians from other cultures. The results of this investigation are applied to the Evangelical Movement in Africa. In the light of Mtuze's (2003:73) allegation that the missionaries 'went all out to destroy African culture which they regarded as damnation and utter debasement of humanity', this Chapter is extremely important, especially if this treatment of African cultures damaged the African identity.

### **1. Culture, humanity and identity**

Answers to the questions "Who am I?" and "Who are we?" are attempted in this section, and how the answers are influenced by one's culture ('culture' will include 'worldview' – see below – unless they are separately discussed). Clearly the answers will also be greatly affected by one's religious affiliation and its religious texts as they largely shape culture. Even the atheist's worldview is ultimately religious as it requires faith to believe that there is no God (see Chapter 2). It is 'often suggested that [atheistic] Marxism has many features of a religion' (Williams 2008:5'). Atheists of course deny these statements and claim to have no faith in any religious sense (An Introduction to Atheism, 1997 [Online]). Lane (1995) deals in detail with communication between Westerners and Easterners. Though the book is written to facilitate better communication between East and West, it reveals how significantly people are shaped by their cultures. 'Despite the global village, we operate differently in culture and thinking' (:2). But just how much is one's identity (personal and group) linked to one's culture?

#### 1.1 Definition of culture

##### 1.1.1 Broad definition



Hiebert (cited in Flemming 2005:118) defines culture as ‘the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behaviour and products shared by a group of people’ (also Niebuhr cited in Carson 2008:11). ‘Culture is an habitual way of thinking and acting which has been added to our instinctual behaviour’ (Nolan 1995:73). Culture is thus not just about a people’s external behaviour and other visible features of a society. It is thus more complex than just what the eye observes. It can be broken down into three categories: technological, sociological and ideological (Hesselgrave 1991:101). ‘At their deepest level, all cultures and subcultures have a shared set of assumptions about the way things are – a worldview’ (Kraft cited in Flemming 2005:118-119; see below). Craffert (1999b:4-5) posits at least five elements of culture (‘cultural systems’): people or population, worldview, material cultural products, social organization, and social institutions. Each culture ‘may have some special contribution to make to our common task of coming to terms with life’s mysteries’ (Kaufman cited in Pityana 1995:172), including African culture. It is important to note that people are not born with culture; it is learnt (Nolan 1995:73). Culture provides the capacity to ‘rule’ the environment, which includes nurturing and sustaining life and community. Constructing a worldview (which is influenced by natural revelation and to some degree by culture) and thereby conquering the challenge of survival and development are no mean accomplishments.

It needs to be noted again before moving on to a fuller discussion of worldview that for the evangelical all cultures (including their worldviews) are to be evaluated in terms of the biblical worldview and its moral-ethical norms. Because of natural revelation and the Fall, there are positive and negative elements in every culture (Lausanne Covenant cited in Hesselgrave 1991:118). It also needs to be appreciated that there are neutral elements in cultures: ‘... many cultural prescriptions are not matters of right or wrong at all but simply matters of utility or taste’ (Hesselgrave 1991:105). This matter will be taken up later.

### 1.1.2 Worldview

Culture is largely the expression of worldview (Craffert 1999b:20). It ‘is the foundation on which everything else in culture is built’ (Smith 1984:18). Worldview is like the foundations of a building (Craffert 1999b:5) and the steel reinforcement in a concrete building. The foundation shapes and supports the building and is invisible, and the steel gives strength to the building, holds it together and is also invisible. Worldview ‘is a *set of assumptions* about the world which we are taught from childhood and which we bring to every experience. ... Our worldview contains the basic beliefs about the truth of the world and reality’ (Bate 2002:33).

Worldview is ‘the comprehensive picture of how the world works ...’ (Craffert 1999b:5). It ‘includes information about the self, others, space, time and nature’ (:5). Carson (2008:95-96) shows just how comprehensive a worldview has to be: it must address the questions of deity, origins, significance (who am I?), evil, salvation, and *telos* (what the future holds). ‘There is a sense in which the nature of the environment in part shapes conceptions of it’ (Craffert 1999b:19). Worldview ‘is a picture *of* reality but also becomes a lens *through which* we see reality’ (Craffert 1999b:16). Smith (1984:18) states that basic beliefs [worldview] to a considerable degree ‘determine what personal experience we have, what groups have authority over us, and consequently how we outwardly behave.’ ‘We live every day in the light of a picture of the world we have received and which we do not often question because we believe it to be real’ (Tidball 1997:13). Worldview not only helps people to explain the world, but it also helps ‘to make value judgements, to provide reinforcement for preferred behaviour, to give *identity* and to provide ways for adapting to new circumstances’ (Bate 2002:116, emphasis added). The different parts of behaviour within a culture are linked by the worldview, and so it is the worldview that enables and causes all behaviour to have meaning and to make sense. ‘In this way the culture is given an *identity* and by accepting the culture people accept the *identity* that goes with it. It gives *identity* to the group ...’ (Bate 2002:117, emphasis added). Clearly *worldview* and *culture* shape one’s *identity*. Using the building foundation metaphor for worldview, Smith (1984:18) states that ‘once the building is up, it is impossible to change the foundations without smashing down the building.’ Clearly the amount of worldview change Christianity expects of an African convert is therefore highly significant. It will be argued below that it is minimal and therefore not damaging of the convert’s identity.

The religious elements of worldviews have dominated human history: theism, polytheism, pantheism, and more recently atheism. Agnosticism and atheism have been influential in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the West. Modernism and postmodernism largely flow from a worldview that downplays or excludes God or denies his existence. Many people have grown up in communities where a different worldview has been held, e.g. children of missionaries and immigrants. In this case one is influenced by another worldview and culture, but ultimately more by the worldview and culture of the ethnic group of one’s parents (see Chapter 6) (see below for the case of parents from different cultures).

Since culture flows out of worldview, cultural changes can only occur permanently if the worldview is altered. Further, outward cultural changes are easier to achieve than worldview changes (cf Tshilenga 2005:183). Smith (1984:20) goes even further and maintains that ‘Core

beliefs [part of worldview] are not changed by discussion or by reasoning.’ He (:20) notes that the core ‘is developed through enculturation,’ the process of a baby’s rearing in a specific culture. He then states that ‘It follows that the only way the core [worldview] can be changed is for the person to once again become a baby.’ He (:20) then refers to the new birth at Christian conversion as ‘the way that Christian belief can change the patterns of individual lives and of cultures’ (see Chapter 6 on the implications of this for evangelism and discipleship). He (:20) finally records the following conclusion: ‘The social and psychological problem of changing deeply held attitudes and behavior patterns has a theological answer.’ This is relevant to the African situation where aspects of the worldview are holding back development (see Chapter 6).

Discipleship of African converts must clearly not neglect bringing about the necessary changes to their worldview as this alone will produce Christians with a lifestyle consistently faithful to the Gospel. The great challenge then in discipleship is to work at worldview change – a most important part of discipleship. It must not be assumed that this is always automatic or easy or assured with the passing of time. It needs to be noted that to reject part or all of the biblical worldview is to reject Christianity because Christianity stands or falls by its worldview. Failure to fully and confidently embrace the Christian worldview will mean the convert will revert to forbidden previous customs and rituals when Christianity appears unable to meet critical and urgent needs that ATR meets (though in different ways). The missionaries in Africa generally failed here, and thus did not prevent syncretism, much of which was practised secretly away from the missionaries’ eyes. This led to a weaker form of Christianity in the converts, or worse still, another gospel. In Christianity the new birth, indwelling Spirit of God, justification, reconciliation and sanctification play a major role in achieving total acceptance of the Christian worldview. For some converts this acceptance is immediate and permanent as in the Apostle Paul’s case: ‘Paul, once an ardently religious Jew, now was converted into an equally ardent Christian ...’ (Tidball 1997:64). For others it is a longer process, an example of which is found in 1 Corinthians 8-10. However, to gain the needed worldview change and sustain it, a careful plan of sanctification/discipleship needs to be carefully worked out and systematically applied.

## 1.2 Is human life essentially cultural?

Bate (2002:149) states that ‘Culture penetrates every aspect of our life and all of our human being. That is because all that we do has a cultural dimension. To be a human being is to be a cultural person, for human life is cultural.’ There ‘are no acultural persons’ (Hessegrave 1991:102; also Nolan 1995:73). Speaking of culture, Kraft (1979:62) says, ‘we have acquired

[in our cultures] the very necessary frame of reference, the rules of the game, the design for living without which, apparently, no human can exist.' Du Toit (2002:86) notes the close link between humanity and culture: 'Where humans are, there culture is to be found (*ubi homo ibi cultura*).' Bate (2002:24) concludes that 'Without culture we are never fully human. So culture is central to our nature.' 'In the debate on culture we are constantly traversing the borderlands of human existence' (Pityana 1995:168). Culture 'is both a product of human beings and yet at the same time there is a sense in which we can say that the human being is the product of culture' (Keteyi cited in Kudadjie and Osei 1998:21). Therefore human nature is impossible without culture. One just needs to read about those human babies reared by animals to see the truth of this statement. These children are sub-human because they lacked rearing in a human culture – 'a mindless and consequently unworkable monstrosity' (cited in Nolan 1995:73). They have no human identity; however, they have a cultural identity in the sense that they identify with the animal way of life in which they were reared.

The conclusion that culture is integral to one's identity has interesting ramifications for our approach to the cultures of others. 'To fully understand our [and others'] humanness, we must be multiculturally fluent' (DeYoung 1995:179). Clearly to fully appreciate a fellow human one must seek a knowledge of that person through his/her culture. The Westerner is not automatically equipped to grasp and understand Africans because of their superior technology. They need to first become acquainted with ATR and other African customs and values and then engage in 'interpathy.' Fresen (2000:178) defines Augsburg's interpathy as 'letting go of my own framework of thought and values [culture] and the willingness to enter into that [culture] of the other. ... This is a powerful experience for both people and is possibly the most profound level at which our cross-cultural separateness and woundedness can begin to be healed.'

It has been noted that Bate uses the term *culture* in the wider sense, i.e. including worldview. So for him it is not only worldview that is linked with human identity. Williams (2008:5'), however, feels that 'Worldview, but not culture, is part of a person's identity [what a person IS]; it leads to action [culture - what a person DOES].' So though culture for Bate includes worldview and actions, for him identity is tied to both worldview and the culture it spawns. Bate would argue that when one is observed in action in one's society one is labelled, e.g. a Xhosa or a Zulu or a Welshman, etc. So one's culture (which is in one's face), perhaps more than worldview (which is largely invisible, though behind culture), defines one's personal identity. This would explain why Bate does not separate worldview and culture as Williams does. Williams rightly connects beliefs and attitudes with worldview and therefore identity –

‘Our identities as persons are shaped by the strong moral evaluations that we hold...’ (Adeney 2007:33). It is true that much of culture is neutral and therefore not really the outworking of one’s worldview; nevertheless the amoral elements also seem to play a part in defining one’s identity. Bate’s linking of culture with identity can be supported if one considers the hypothetical case of a person without any actions: from the observer’s perspective this person would not have a cultural identity, which in turn would put a question mark over his/her identity as a human being.

The linkage of personal identity to one’s culture would seem to support the view that to make major changes in one’s culture (including worldview) is to damage one’s self-identity. Since Christianity requires worldview and life-style changes, it could be argued that Christianity would tamper with one’s identity and thus be viewed as undesirable and even dangerous.

Bates (2002:4) notes that ‘in the modern world ... ethnic groups [defined largely by culture] intermingle in the economy and in urban areas ... [and] cultures themselves undergo change with time.’ ‘Cultures are never static. They change constantly’ (Adeney 2007:37; also Carson 2008:77). Bate (2002:129) notes that ‘since the arrival of the white settlers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the region has seen the emergence of new cultural groupings like the “Zulu”, the “Basotho” and the “Tsonga.” ’ The Zulu identity was forged through ‘state-building, military conquest, physical expansion, the absorption of refugees and defeated people, and, ultimately, defeat and colonization at the hands of the British empire’ (Parker and Rathbone 2007:40). Bate (2002:100) also gives examples of changing cultures: sports’ rules are changed; parliaments revise and even repeal laws; religious rituals change; even traditions change, e.g. Shaka banned the rite of male circumcision in the Zulu tradition. Further, ‘worldviews and basic cultural assumptions can be challenged and changed by both external and internal factors’ (Flemming 2005:119). Bate (2002:21) also refers to the fact that new cultures are even now being formed: ‘The multicultural and multilingual societies are themselves becoming new cultures with their own worldviews, values and behavioural systems.’ So cultures change and apparently without negative effects on ethnic/cultural groups.

As noted above, culture is ‘acquired as we grow up’, a process called ‘*enculturation* or *primary socialisation*’ (Bate 2002:4). Bate (:4) then concludes that ‘it is possible for anyone of any genetic background to acquire any human culture’ (also Smith 1984:14). Or as du Toit (2002:79, 89,90) puts it: ‘Values [part of culture] determine our identity’; ‘the content of ethics [part of culture] ... is ... not biologically driven. ... Genes do not determine beliefs [part of culture] but cultural selection does. Culture exceeds the narrow genetic determinism, moving beyond the restrictive demands of survival by natural selection.’ Bate (:5) mentions

the Xhosa who is born and brought up in the USA to illustrate this. This could suggest that aspects of a different culture could be adopted without one's personal identity being endangered.

Bate (:5) also reminds us that 'A moment's reflection should show us that all of us participate in a number of cultural paradigms at one and the same time.' In complex societies, especially as in the United States or India, 'it is impossible to speak of a single worldview, just as we cannot talk about a single unified culture' (Flemming 2005:119). Some children throughout their childhood have lived for significant periods in different cultures and therefore have been enculturated into more than one culture. In South Africa, for example, some children of mixed descent have lived the first few years of their lives in a Coloured culture and the rest of their childhood in an African culture, as was the case with a student at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape where the writer worked up until the middle of 2010. This capacity to be at home in more than one culture suggests that one's human identity is not so much shaped by a single culture as expressed through culture (see below on supra-identity). So it would seem that a modification of or addition to one's culture, especially as an adult, would not necessarily damage one's human identity.

Life as experienced in the age of globalisation is 'more about the patchwork quilt of cultural complexity' (Bate 2002:6). Put slightly differently, globalization leads to a 'relentless homogenization of cultures' (Slimbach 2001:1). In South African cities very few black South Africans 'live within a traditional African cultural framework' (Bate 2002:130), but within a multicultural context. 'Whilst our heritage may be African, European or Asian, much of our lifestyle today is sourced in symbols and values coming from North America' (:132). The success of many Africans and others in this multicultural world seems to indicate that multiculturalism does not affect their identity. Clearly we are better equipped for life in the modern world if we can operate comfortably in different cultures and a multi-cultural context. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have 'seen unprecedented movements of peoples, mostly because of war, famine, economic needs and opportunities'; in 2004 'there were an estimated 174 million migrants in the world' (The New People Next Door 2004). Slimbach (2001:1) therefore concludes that there is a need to be trained 'to function competently in an increasingly urban, multicultural, and interconnected environment'. So it is not surprising that he believes seminaries should 'produce students who are ... culturally adaptive ... who possess a broad cultural identity, a preference for diversity over sameness ...' (:2). To facilitate this process, awareness of one's own culture and how others see it is important, as well as the ability to critically evaluate cultures, including one's own. This will make it

possible, and is advisable, to enrich one's culture through its refinement and accommodating positive aspects of other cultures. This requires dialogue 'in an atmosphere of mutual respect and reaching out' (Bate 2002:10). Success in such a dialogue will make intercultural living easier and lead to the formation of a common culture in a multicultural context. But this 'common culture' 'is not a culture that condemns us all to the sameness prescribed by the hegemonic group but one which allows all to be rooted in their own traditions whilst reaching out to create new ones with those who have remained alien and estranged in the same land' (:10). Bate probably would not see a healthy human identity as being dependent on living only in and through one's culture.

Guest (2004:110) describes how cultural exclusivity, a desire to make one's culture a monoculture, has led to many wars between cultural groups: 'European history in the first half of the twentieth century is largely a story of tribal bloodletting, and recent years have seen carnage in the Balkans. Asia and the Americas have also had their troubles ...' As regards Africa, he notes that 'ethnic strife seems most acute. Memories of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 are still fresh, and Burundi's civil war shows few signs of ending.' He goes on to say that ethnic differences 'have been the pretext for violence in Sudan, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, both Congos – the list goes on.' This history provides another reason why cultural flexibility and accommodation are desirable in the world. Clearly cultural identity is no excuse for threatening other cultural (ethnic) groups.

If one's 'Culture carries with it the experience of identity' (Bate 2002:23), could it be argued that to be at home in a multicultural setting means one effectively has a disturbed or schizophrenic identity (perhaps unknowingly)? It would seem from the apparent harmlessness of cultural flexibility, changes and merges, as noted above, that a healthy identity is not tied exclusively to one's mother culture. Identity is also linked to being part of the human race, which the writer will call *supra-identity*. He will call the identity linked to one's culture *primary identity*. The supra-identity would therefore not be threatened by absorption of elements of other cultures, including the unique aspects of the Christian's worldview and lifestyle. But this is a different matter to totally rejecting one's primary identity and completely replacing with an identity only linked to another culture, as the missionaries generally advocated and actively promoted. This would seem to be impossible and if attempted or forced on a person it would appear that it would seriously fracture his/her primary identity and thereby cause terrible psychological damage. Humans are obviously meant to appreciate that they are also part of the human race and link their identity to it. Therefore their supra-identity and primary identity, the two sides of their basic personal

identity, need to be strong and protected. Weakening either would weaken the other. Further, since primary identity is closely connected to supra-identity, upsetting one's primary identity would upset one's supra-identity – a double identity blow. If this is what Christianity entails it will be rejected, as the missionaries often found. Below, however, it is argued that Christianity does not try to replace one's primary identity forged in the mother culture or undermine one's human identity.

Gevisser's (2007) biography of Thabo Mbeki is most insightful and relevant here. His cultural history was diverse: his upbringing was in a rural area, but somewhat disconnected from both the *amaqaba* and Christian *amagqoboka* amongst whom he grew up, followed by nearly a decade in Britain, a year in the USSR, and lengthy periods in different African countries, especially Zambia, many visits to the West, and part of the multi-racial ANC leadership, and then the president of South Africa until near the end of 2008. Mbeki was therefore influenced by many cultures. He even had a white girl-friend in England. After his return from exile to South Africa he found himself disconnected from his clan and fellow Africans in South Africa. This seems to have prevented him from experiencing a healthy, confident self-identity. It was after participating in traditional ceremonies with his clan, the *amaZizi*, that he began to identify more and more with his African tribal roots and appreciate the importance of this for his personal identity. He listened to old people at Nyili telling their tales. His response was as follows: 'I said, "I must really study all this." Because maybe there's an element of the identity of the person which really ought not to be lost' (Mbeki cited in Gevisser 2007:7). Gevisser (:7) also argues that Mbeki's African Renaissance reflects his journey back to his roots, a process of finding a more complete and stable identity for both himself and fellow Africans. He (:7) quotes Mbeki to show this search: 'Unless we are able to answer the question: Who were we?, we shall not be able to answer the question: What shall we be?' 'The Africanism he embraced during his presidency – sometimes at odds with both his communist past and his worldly modernism – stems thus from his own disconnection and his longing to be reconnected [to fellow blacks and their culture]' (Gevisser 2007:16-17), a connection that could only be achieved by rooting his identity in African culture (and worldview). In his famous speech at the launch of the South African Constitution on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1996 he stated that he had achieved this: "I am an African" ([Online]). Mbeki's life seems to powerfully illustrate the importance of identifying with and embracing one's cultural roots. However, it must be noted that in his 'I am an African' speech (1996) he refers to many other peoples who contributed to his formation: Khoi, San, Ethiopians, Ashanti and migrants/immigrants from abroad, e.g. Malay, Boers, and Indians. Mbeki is a good example



of one who adjusts to other cultures and is enriched by them, but whose true identity is linked to his/her own African culture. It is interesting to note how Mbeki in his articles, letters and speeches identified with and spoke on behalf of Africans. But his Africanness is not just racial, but, as has been seen above, cultural – hence his pushing of an African Renaissance. Clearly a healthy identity is bound up with one's culture.

The Afrikaner Beyers Naude resisted Afrikaner domination but 'never renounced his Afrikaner identity' (Kretzschmar 1995c:90). The connectedness with one's ethnic (cultural) group is apparently the only way to an undivided identity, so important for inner peace, harmony, stability and strength. No wonder Dwane (cited in Mtuzze 2003:88; also Higgs and Smith 2002:101) says that Africans need to be liberated from European culture 'in order that we may be ourselves, the people whom God has made, and wants us to be.' Because of European cultural imperialism 'some have sought to eschew all cultural identity, even at the cost of denying that culture is at all significant. But is this colourless vision a worthwhile solution?' (Kretzschmar 1995c:93). Kretzschmar discerns the need for holding on unashamedly to one's own culture. Surely Mbeki's journey back to his roots strongly endorses this. Also it is questionable in the light of the above that one should eschew all cultural identity, especially as it would negatively affect one's identity – ethnic/cultural and human identities. In the old South Africa the writer found it difficult to get blacks to talk about their culture. This was because Western cultural imperialism had taught them that to open up about black culture was to be ridiculed and experience cultural confusion and shame. Bate (2002:66,135-136) notes that there are universal needs, like food, clothing, shelter, status, esteem, respect, language, a religious system, a kinship system, a political system, a legal system, an economic system, an educational system, art, play or recreation and a medical/healing system (cf also Tshilenga 2005:39-40); 'but their meaning and the behaviour associated with them are cultural.' If cultures ultimately meet peoples' universal needs, not only could one not survive without culture (Smith 1984:14), but the role of all cultures is the same. This fact should prevent us from driving a wedge between cultures and deifying certain ones and demonizing others. It would seem that the quotation from Bate means meeting one's universal needs can only be meaningfully and effectively achieved within one's mother culture. Further, that if one's identity is linked with one's culture, seeking to meet one's human needs through other cultures would seem to be detrimental not only to one's identity, but also one's wellbeing.

McGavran is the father of the Church Growth Movement. It has made 'a highly significant impact on the development of mission and local church methodologies in the last half of the

twentieth century' (Church Growth Movement [Online]). He stresses that church growth takes place best in a homogeneous unit of society. He has drawn on the insights of the social sciences in developing his church growth strategy. His work is a developed science of church growth. His basic thesis is that ethnic groups/clans/tribes identify themselves as 'we' in distinction to 'them.' He favours church growth in one-culture groups. For this, and other reasons, including mission statistics which proves his thesis. Though his insights are interesting to missionaries and pastors, it seems the New Testament picture (see below) rather supports heterogeneous churches in heterogeneous societies, because the Gospel is God's solution to overcoming cultural barriers and brings different people together in unity in the one church (Eph 2:15) without damaging their primary identity. Failure to form multicultural churches means the Gospel's goal is not reached, namely the unification of a divided world. This prevents the glory of the Gospel as a manifestation of God's multifaceted grace being seen and this greatly dishonours God and his Son. McGavran's research does, however, reveal the importance of an unthreatened cultural identity for growth in Christianity and other areas, e.g. in community and economic development.

### 1.3 Supra, primary and other identities

#### 1.3.1 Supra and primary identities

As noted above, one's supra-identity is one's consciousness of being a human being, of being part of the human family that is made up of over 7000 ethnolinguistic peoples (Johnsone and Mandryk 2001:1), of which about 600 are found in the southern half of the African continent (Parker and Rathbone 2007:61). However, the human race as being one race has not gone unchallenged. The theory of evolution and Africa's pre-scientific and pre-technological traditional societies led to the West viewing Africa's peoples as primitive – a lower, inferior or pre-human species. The peoples of sub-Saharan Africa found out they were 'Negroes' only when their lands were intruded by white people. Unander (2000) argues in his book that the existence of different races is a myth; that 'There is only the human race, from every perspective: biological, historical, and in God's Word, the Bible' (:2). 'The 19th-century notion that humankind can be divided into discrete races has now been abandoned by geneticists and historians, alike' (Parker and Rathbone 2007:9). Modern media and transport, the internet, international trade and business, the fact that 'All people can freely interbreed and produce fertile offspring' (Ham, *et al* 1999:57), have brought home this fact as never before. '...the so-called "racial" differences are absolutely trivial ... The ABC News science page stated, "What the facts show is that there are differences among us, but they stem from culture, not race" ' (:54, 55). Ham, *et al* (1999:89-90) deduce from there being only one race

biologically that ‘Therefore there is in essence no such thing as “interracial marriage” ’ – ‘there is only intercultural marriage.’

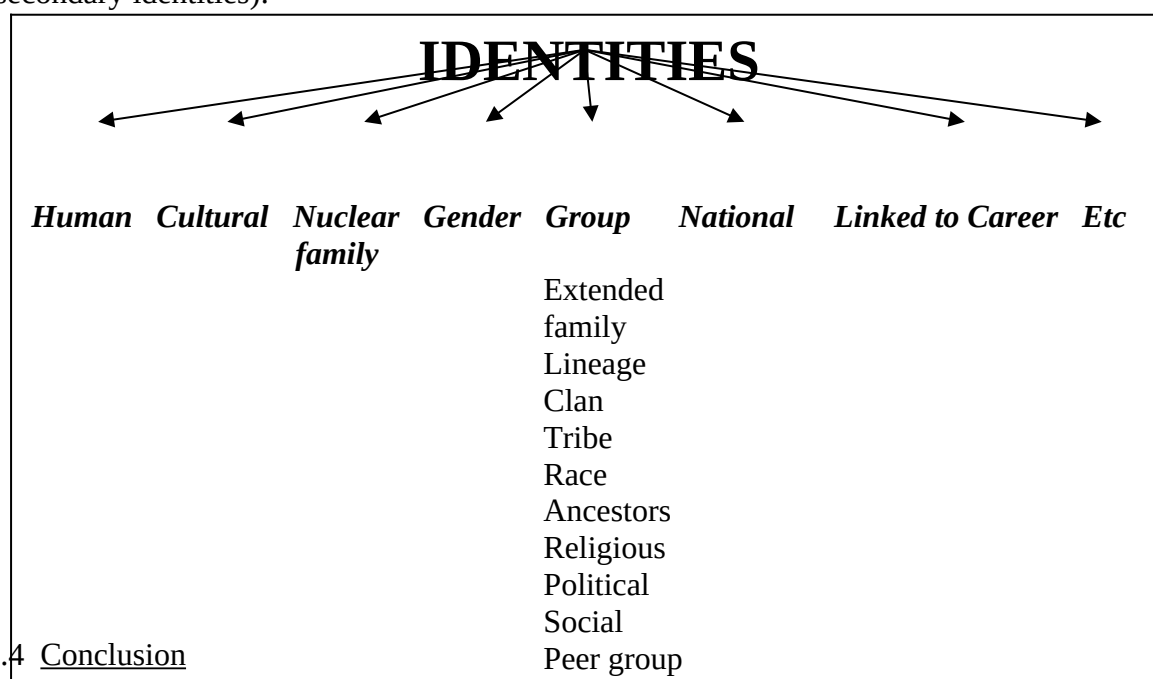
The biblical revelation is emphatic that there is one human race to which all Africans, and all other peoples, belong. The biblical way of presenting this fact is humans’ solidarity in Adam (1 Cor 15:22a,48a,49; Acts 17:26). Nicholls (1979:76-78) notes that this, firstly, results from being descendents of Adam and all sharing the image of God. The image of God has been variously defined during church history. The following items, individually or groups of them, reflect the different definitions: ability to worship the creator; memory; knowledge and understanding; will; choice of moral values; rational thinking and communication; creativity; dominion and plurality (Milne 1998:119-120; McGrath 2007:360,366). The dominion aspect of the image of God is based on Genesis 1:27-28 which seems to connect the image of God with rule over the earth (Israel 2008:3). The plurality aspect has two parts. Firstly, since God is a Trinity, this is taken by some to mean that sharing God’s image means being modeled after the Trinity. Montgomery (nd: chapter 6) sees the triadic nature of God in humans in terms of ‘spirit, soul, and body’, where the three are ‘mental, emotional, and physical activity’ respectively. Secondly, because God is three persons, being created in his image means human plurality, i.e. the human race is created for community but with variety (cf the two genders) (Young 2004:239). Since every human has been created in the image of God, all share the same human qualities, including the capacity for scientific investigation, development of technology, and the need for and experience of relationship/community. Nicholls (1979:78-79) further notes that human solidarity in Adam also results from the following: rebellion against the correct worship of God; rebellion against the moral law; the perversion of our rationality in communication; misuse of the gift of creativity; and the fragmentation of society. These commonalities stemming from the Fall have led to the perversion and misuse of culture and the emergence of racism, e.g. the claim of cultural and racial superiority and imperialism and ecological damage (:78). This would explain why culture is such a volatile subject, especially in Africa where Western and African cultures have been juxtaposed.

Williams (2008:‘5’) argues for different races within the one human species. Though he views culture as differentiating peoples, he does not believe culture is the sole cause of division in the human species. He mentions the situation where within the same cultural group there is prejudice on the basis of appearances (e.g. 1 Cor 12, Ja 2:1-13; and 1 Cor 11:17-34 can be added). It cannot be denied that distinct ethnic-cultural groups frequently share common physical features which contribute to their identity. For example, in Africa where distinct

cultural groups/tribes have similar physical characteristics, like hair type and skin colour, identity is linked to these physical attributes supporting the idea of the black race (cf the title ‘African’). Though black tribes in Africa share a common ‘racial’ identity, in practice their cultural differences seem to define their identity more strongly. The concept of ‘African’ is questionable (see below) as it seems it was the result rather of colonialism, the development gap between Africa and the West, and geography (all living in and originated from the same continent). Europe is another example where in practice white skin and therefore white race is rather incidental to identity. One is first a Frenchman, an Italian, a Romanian, etc. Here the idea of a European race is based more on being first world and living in the same continent. It appears that differences in cultures largely led to the idea of various races (see Chapter 6). If it is granted that there are different races, e.g. white, black, Indian, Chinese, etc, race contributes to identity. However, where the races are based on physical characteristics like skin colour, each group is so large that race almost merges into human race (see below). Even if the idea of several races as well as different cultures is accepted, the corporate character of the church can accommodate people from different cultures and races (see below) and sees them all as full members of the human race.

### 1.3.2 Other identities

Human and cultural identities are not the only identities. There are other secondary identities that do not significantly affect one’s primary (cultural) identity, and therefore will not be dealt with in this section. The following table gives some idea of the range of identities before becoming a Christian: human (supra-identity), cultural (primary identity) and other (secondary identities):



### 1.4 Conclusion

The common human identity – supra-identity – needs greater stress in Africa due to its undermining through colonialism, the theory of evolution and racism. Further, the primary or cultural identity needs to be recognized as a most important part of identity, and that therefore African identity must be respected and encroaching Western culture countered. Humans are creatures that are embedded in culture, have meaning through culture, and express themselves (their humanity) through culture and hence the importance of a person's culture for a healthy personal identity. Human identity seems to be confirmed through cultural identity, and hence the surprising importance of a healthy cultural identity for a healthy human identity. Therefore to belittle a person's culture is to undermine his humanity.

Monocultural societies are becoming less and less a feature of the human landscape. However, there can be no return to the mosaic of isolated, insulated cultures. Chipkin (2007:23) notes Hodgkin's reference to the emergence in Africa of 'the great, amorphous, squalid *agglomeration urbaine* ... a new 'indigenous civilisation.' ' Since culture is learnt, cultural broadening and even major cultural changes are possible and at times desirable. It is interesting to note that 'For the most part, the drifting from traditional to modern ways of living is voluntary' (Guest 2004:257). However, one's mother culture will always be the basis of one's identity (cf Mbeki's story above, though in his case ATR – the core of Africanism – also linked his identity with the rest of black Africa), and therefore no serious attempt should be made to alter one's culture. This whole scenario is bedevilled by the human race's solidarity in sin. Villa-Vicencio (cited in Kretzschmar 1995c:93) summarizes the need in South Africa for both a new kind of supra identity, namely national identity, and also recognition of different primary identities among the people: 'The challenges facing South Africa are twofold: The forging of a common or universal sense of belonging and the obligation to respect the right to a particular identity.' He means 'a form of national unity which transcends racial, ethnic and gender discrimination' without denying 'particularist strategies' (Villa-Vicencio 1995:106).

In South Africa there are different groups stemming from the apartheid years: *Whites*, *Blacks*, *Coloureds* and *Indians*. Each of these groups has its own distinctive culture (there are, however, some minor cultural differences between those of different languages in all four groups). Each group also has unique physical features, especially kind of hair and skin colour (with noticeable variations among the Coloureds). Further, the development of each group was different, and still differs largely. The whites generally were and are the most developed, and in decreasing order of development were and are the Indians, Coloureds and Blacks. The

theory of evolution and the apartheid theologians and government helped precipitate this fourfold racial classification. The underlying reason for the development of apartheid was that the whites saw themselves as culturally and racially superior to the other people in South Africa, and did not therefore want to mix with them. The writer believes the apartheid government got around confessing the real reason by claiming that apartheid respected the different cultures and that each cultural group is best ruled by itself. Though ‘a people’s identity is tied up with [its] culture’, for ‘the African, the blackness of their skin is another general distinguishing feature’ (Owomoyele cited in Nkesiga 2005:83). This meant ‘There is no concept of culture (or reality of culture) existing in South Africa today that does not have a very clear political content’ (Botman 1995:162). Snyman (2008:93) sees one of Thabo Mbeki’s weekly newsletters (March 2007) as ‘an example of the racialising effect on identity construction in current South African identity politics.’ ‘Essentialist thinking on both sides of the racial spectrum not only stifles the debate on racism, but also makes it difficult to transcend its parameters’ (:94). Sadly then in South Africa (and the rest of Africa) the missionaries, colonialism, Western cultural and economic dominance, indebtedness to the West, and apartheid, have complicated and hijacked the culture debate into a racial and political one. By viewing all black Africans as a race instead of people groups with similar worldviews and cultures that were somewhat dissimilar to those of the Western people groups, and because they lagged far behind the West technologically and economically, it was easy for Westerners to treat blacks as a race that was inferior ontologically and not only culturally. This meant that the most important thing about Africans, namely that they were ‘created in the image of God with inalienable rights’ (Makula 2005:5) and therefore part of the one human race, was not on the radar screen. It is no wonder the races in Africa, particularly South Africa, have viewed each other with suspicion, fear and even hostility.

Mamdani (2009) argues that colonialism did not even view blacks as a race, like it did the Europeans and the Asians and Arabs and even the Tutsi and Fulani (in this hierarchical order) which were all considered a civilizing influence, but only as ethnic groups, the implication of which was that non-Africans had no ethnicity – only Africans had ethnicity (:126). Mamdani believes colonialism as a result gave ethnicity an exaggerated importance in Africa unlike in Europe which forced each ethnic group to live in a different legal universe while in the various African countries they lived under civil law. ‘While civil law spoke the language of rights, customary law spoke the language of tradition, of authenticity’ (:127). Customary law was thus not racially specific as was the case with civic law, but ethnic specific (:128). ‘The colonial state was ... an ethnic federation, comprising so many Native Authorities, each

defined ethnically' (:128). Now in the administration of customary law, the executive, the legislature, the judicial and the administrative were fused (:129) unlike in the case of the administration of civic law. This meant that customary law made it impossible for the rule of law to operate (:127). Customary law implied the power to force the subjects to follow custom (:130). After liberation 'the native sat on the top of the political world designed by the settler' and 'Indigeneity remained the test for rights' (:134). For Mamdani (:142) the greater crime of colonialism 'was to politicize indigeneity, first as a settler libel against the native, and then as a native self-assertion.' Certainly Mamdani has helped South Africans to better understand the stress on tribal traditions and Africanness and the resulting resistance to non-nativistic cultures and civic law. This also helps explain Africa's lack of development (see below).

In order for black Africans and black Americans to be accepted by whites they have had to adopt white culture. It is one tragedy to be treated as an inferior race with inferior cultures, but another to have to look and live like whites for meaningful interaction with them at the different levels of society. A comment concerning African-Americans is apposite here. Hopler and Hopler (1993:134-145) trace their history and show the tremendous challenges they faced after the abolishment of slavery. After manumission 'They were given citizenship, but they were not given land, jobs or training. They were not given any means by which they could be incorporated into the cultural value system. The result was that almost any Black value became negative' (Hopler and Hopler 1993:134). Integration was made extra difficult by expecting them to effectively melt into mainstream white America, and by allowing only limited numbers of African-Americans to integrate: 'about every twenty years the system opens up and absorbs several hundred thousand Blacks ... Then the system again closes and won't allow any more in' (:134). A final and sobering comment on the American situation is worth adding: 'But if we understand the degree to which the American system rejects blackness and Puerto Ricanness, we can understand the response of total disrespect for the system that cut them off' (:136).

This past legacy has been countered in South Africa with the promotion of a non-racial identity (Snyman 2008:94). It would seem that Snyman wants to create a universal South African cultural identity ('a common culture', Botman 1995:160; 'an integrated national identity', Villa-Vicencio and Niehaus 1995:12), which is not only most unlikely, but would undermine the primary identity of all South Africans, a psychologically and politically dangerous procedure as noted above. Freeing South Africans from the White-Black divide is the great challenge. It would also enable a debate 'in which the [cultural] constructedness of identity receives more prominence' (Snyman 2008:84). But the process would have to guard

against ‘the universalising of Europeaness as the norm’ (Snyman 2008:105), and thus the standard by which to judge other cultures. This means the following thinking and practice must be broken: ‘whiteness is regarded as normative, pervasive and general and not contextual ... It means that race is only applied to non-white people as the deviant. White people ... function as the human norm’ (Snyman 2008:113). It is sad that conceiving and presenting Christ as a white male led to a travesty of the Christian life: it ‘was considered permissible to degrade and harass women and dehumanize and humiliate people of color’ (DeYoung 1995:32).

The writer referred above to a student from a mixed marriage (black and coloured) with whom he worked for four years. He was enculturated consecutively in both cultures (including their languages). It was interesting to note that this student at times identified with the Xhosa culture and people and at other times with the coloured culture and people. Though he is clearly bicultural and can therefore function well in both cultures, he often showed confusion as to his identity in the multiracial and multicultural Bible Institute Eastern Cape. It appeared his identity was mostly linked to the Coloured people, but not consistently. How does the above discussion on the link between culture and identity apply to this student? His case suggests there is a difference between (i) being enculturated in one culture, but growing up for a period in another cultural environment, and (ii) being enculturated in two cultures (though not simultaneously). Enculturation in two cultures therefore seems to confuse ethnic/cultural identity – in the student’s case, is he a Xhosa or a Coloured? Since these two ethnic-cultural groups are different one can understand his dilemma. Being reared in two cultures (consecutively) in a society where there is equal respect for the two cultures, would make the problem less severe (sadly Africans often see themselves as superior to Coloureds and vice versa). Another part of the answer to being brought up in a bicultural family would be to be raised only in the culture of one of the parents. Perhaps the student should see his identity as Coloured-African. Christianity offers a further solution to multicultural upbringing: the multicultural background is viewed positively as it enables one to be effective in Christian ministry on a wider and even global front; and by stressing one’s Christian identity (see Section 2 below). The student’s case illustrates that identity is not divorced from culture (in which one was socialized during childhood). The following testimony of a tertiary student shows that trying to change to another culture disturbs one’s identity: ‘I have a very positive feeling toward Western culture, because it suits me best and I enjoy it. But I cannot change my identity by birth [and accompanying African culture]. I am an African and nothing will change that, I will always be like that’ (van der Walt 1997:103). The student appreciates what



Western culture offers, but falsely thinks that embracing aspects of it entails a change of cultural identity.

## **2. How did Christianity in the New Testament Church impact the convert's personal/group identity?**

### 2.1 Changes to personal identity

The Christian is a new person through the new birth. There is a new centre of being and the new identity is linked to Christ. Flowing from this change are a new status before God, new direction to one's life, and new destiny. Clearly the Christian's pre-conversion identity is radically changed.

### 2.2 A new group identity

The Christian is identified with other Christians, i.e. all Christians form a new group. The New Testament uses many metaphors to bring out the fact that all Christians belong to and constitute a new, single group: an ethnic group, a race, a nation, a body, a kingdom, a family, a temple, a bride, and even a single person. Christians in the New Testament are addressed as Christians. This new group identity is really a new supra-identity that replaces the old one and stems from the Christian's solidarity in Christ, the second Adam (Rom 5:12-19). The Christian is part of a new human race, whose progenitor or head is Christ. The question will be faced below as to the implications of this new identity.

### 2.3 The identities of Christians and non-Christians contrasted

The contrast between the identities before and after conversion is frequently and variously presented in the New Testament. The contrast is best portrayed in contrasting couplets.

- \* the saved **versus** the destroyed (Philippians 1:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:9;  
2 Thessalonians 2:10)
- \* the justified **versus** the condemned (Romans 5:16)
- \* slaves of righteousness **versus** slaves of sin (Romans 6:17-18)
- \* members of Christ's kingdom **versus** members of Satan's kingdom  
(Colossians 1:13)
- \* those freed from the Law **versus** those under the Law (Romans 2:12-13; 7:1-4)
- \* those with the Spirit **versus** those without the Spirit (Romans 8:9,15)
- \* the elect **versus** the non-elect (Romans 9:11)
- \* the joined to Christ **versus** the separated from Him (1 Corinthians 6:17;  
Ephesians 2:12; Colossians 1:21- 22)

- \* those in the light **versus** those in the darkness (Ephesians 5:8)
- \* the spiritually alive **versus** the spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1-4)
- \* opponents of Satan **versus** followers of Satan (Ephesians 2:2; 6:11-18)
- \* those serving the living God **versus** those serving idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9)
- \* earthly and heavenly citizens **versus** only earthly citizens (Philippians 2:19-20)
- \* post-conversion life **versus** the pre-conversion life (Colossians 3:7)
- \* strangers in the world (1 Pet 2:11-12) **versus** those at home in this world  
(John 17:14-19)
- \* a life of worldliness **versus** a life without worldliness (1 Pet:2:22-23)

There can be no escaping the implications of these comparisons. For the Christian ‘the historical realm is lifted to a new and higher level of existence’ (Ladd 1993:531). Christians keep their primary (cultural) identity (see below), but have a new overarching identity which is a new supra-identity stemming from now being part of a new human race through new birth. A female tertiary student captured well the Christian’s new identity: ‘My basic identity is lodged in the kingdom of God and not in the country of my birth’ (van der Walt 1997:123).

#### 2.4 Distinctive ethical standards of Christians

Christian ethics are distinctive as the following list shows:

- \* ethics of the inner life (Mt 5:21-26)
- \* ‘put off’ the sins of the old life and ‘put on’ the righteousness of the new  
life (Ephesians 4:17-5:20; Colossians 3:5-17; Titus 2:11-13;  
2 Peter 2:11-12; 1 Peter 1:14-16)
- \* exalt Christ not self (Philippians 1:20; 1 Corinthians 10:31)
- \* love God, believers, non-believers (Good Samaritan parable; Mark 12:28ff;  
Matthew 22:40)
- \* imitate Christ (Philippians 2:5; Ephesians 5:1)
- \* no longer live for oneself but for God’s kingdom (Matthew 6:33a; 16:24;  
Luke 9:58; 14:26,33)
- \* Christ is all to the believer and his/her life model, inspiration and goal  
(Philippians 1:21; Col 3:11, 1:28)
- \* believers are not to marry unbelievers because of the different beliefs and ethics  
(2 Cor 6:14).

The ethical differences between Christians and non-Christians are thus also radical. The Sermon on the Mount ‘portrays the ideal of the person in whose life the reign of God is

absolutely realized' (Ladd 1993:127). In God's kingdom 'one [the Christian] no longer lives for oneself but for the Kingdom of God' (:130). It is clear that it is the ethics, spiritual focus and direction of the Christian's new life that set the church apart from the rest of society. This also emerged from Chapter 4.

## 2.5 Conclusion

The New Testament unmistakably and boldly contrasts Christians and non-Christians. The differences between their identities are immense, especially due to the new moral power of the Gospel – 'Our identities as persons are shaped by the strong moral evaluations that we hold ...' (Adeney 2007:33). The Christians' new overriding personal/group identity, the new supra-identity, stems from their new relationship to God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and membership in Christ's church, which takes priority over their relatedness to family, race, culture, nation, gender, or any other group to which they belong (Mt 12:50) (DeYoung 1995:161). But how does the Christian's new overriding identity impact his/her cultural connections and identity?

It seems after a superficial reading of the above comparative and descriptive lists of verses that Christians throughout the world are to become a truly homogeneous group with exactly the same culture. Section 3 of this Chapter argues against this conclusion. It explores what actually happened in the New Testament church with respect to the Christians' new identity and their relationships to their cultures and ethnic groups.

### **3. How did the new elements and changes in the convert's personal/group identity in the New Testament Church impact his/her culture and cultural identity?**

Here it will be argued that the Christian's identity is not linked exclusively to a new 'Christian' monoculture and monolinguality.

#### 3.1 New Testament Christians did not lose their cultural identity

*Galatians 3:28*, *Colossians 3:11* and *Romans 10:12* appear to suggest the Christian takes on a totally new, exclusive culture at conversion. In the light of other verses considered below, however, they are more likely to mean that the Christians' previous differences of culture, including social standing, gender and language, are not to be obstacles to their oneness in Christ. In other words, these verses do not annul and replace every aspect of the converts' cultures, but rather recognize them as irrevocably part of who Christians are.

The Apostle Paul shows in *1 Corinthians 9:19-23* that he identified with and even participated in the culture of the people to whom he preached the Gospel because it aided his evangelism.

The mission of the church therefore is to go to people within their cultures in order to win them for Christ. This shows that the Gospel must be rooted in the culture of the converts. This all indicates that the world's cultures are not totally, inherently evil. Since culture is implied in the creation ordinance (Gn 1:26,28; 2:8,15,19-20a), it would seem logical that the creation mandate does not imply that the convert would have to reject his/her culture. No wonder 'Christian mission has always affirmed cultural particularity while being global in scope' (Ramachandra 1994:1).

In *Acts 2:9-11* people (Jews and Gentiles) of all nations, languages and cultures hear the Gospel in their own languages. Clearly the Gospel is only fully understood if it comes to people in their mother tongue. This would support the idea that the Gospel can only be fully understood in intelligible and culturally friendly words and experienced within the recipient's cultural framework. Bediako (2003) agrees: 'The ability to hear in one's own language and to express in one's own language one's response to the [Gospel] message ... must lie at the heart of all authentic religious encounter with the divine realm, for divine communication at its deepest is through the mother tongue.' *Acts 2* suggests that it is the Gospel that can unite the different peoples of the world without taking them out of their cultural contexts. This does not imply everything in a culture is non-sinful as noted in Chapter 4.

It would seem from *Revelation 5:9-10, 7:9* and *Isaiah 66:18-19* that in the new age cultural and other differences will be present. This suggests that Christians on the present earth and on the new earth will be culturally heterogeneous. The white robes worn now in heaven symbolize righteous character rather than one culture. The new world will have a 'multiracial and international unity, in which "all the glory and honor of the nations" is made visible, tangible, and audible to all' (Slimbach 2001:3). '... in God's plan of salvation, the heritage of all the nations, purged of all their idolatrous accretions, will ultimately serve his kingdom (e.g., Isa. 60; Rev. 22:24)' (Ramachandra 1994:2). With reference to the 'nations' in these two quotations, it is hard to visualize the absence of their cultures.

In *Matthew 28:19* it can be noted that the Gospel is to be spread throughout the world in every culture. The Great Commission passage in the light of the above passages would suggest that evangelism and discipleship and Christian living take place in the context of the recipient's culture.

At Antioch the mixed congregation of Jews and Gentiles maintained their different cultures, yet they were all called Christians (*Acts 11:26*), showing that being in Christ gave them a new and overarching supra-identity without destroying their Jewish and Gentile cultural-ethnic identities. Their cultures were different, but there was common ground 'in the fact that they

both cleaved to Jesus' (Hopler and Hopler 1993:86). The leadership at Antioch is specifically mentioned as cosmopolitan to stress the multicultural character of the church. 'Each leader probably represented an ethnic contingent. Simeon was black. Lucius was Greek. Manaen was Jewish. An African. An Asian. A Palestinian' (:87). The concept of a Christian African, a Christian Englishman, a Christian German, etc, is valid. Christian identity does not cancel a person's racial/ethnic/cultural identity. The Apostle Paul, a converted Jew, identified himself with the Jewish nation when witnessing to Jews or defending himself against them (*Romans* 9:3). In spite of all the changes required by the Gospel, Paul's ethnic roots were intact (cf 'my people' in Rom 9:3; 11:1). The Gospel is to be preached to Jews and Gentiles (*Romans* 1:14-15), showing that Gentiles were to be approached in their cultures in which their new faith was to be lived.

These passages all indicate that the New Testament Christians did not lose their cultural identity. Kraft (1979:317,318) notes that the members of the New Testament churches were not all characterized by Hebrew culture (including the law): they 'worshiped and ritualized and organized themselves according to a variety of culturally appropriate ways rather than simply in a Hebrew way'. 'The early church was *unified*, but it was not *uniform*' (Ladd 1993:64). However, those elements in the culture (including worldview) irreconcilable to Christian teaching were not retained, as seen in Chapter 4. Tidball (1997:74) captures the relationship between the convert's culture and Christianity: 'The demands of believing the gospel are ... radical without being totally destructive of the current social order [culture].' 'The freedom to interact as sisters and brothers in the family of God, liberated from the impediments of our differences (but not discounting our cultural uniqueness), may be the most important foundation for future community' (DeYoung 1995:181) – especially in Africa. 'From the point of view of the gospel, no culture is inherently unclean in the eyes of God, nor is any culture the exclusive norm of truth' (Ramachandra 1994:1). This must be so if every person is to be reached with the Gospel through his/her own culture and since the Gospel is supra-cultural.

It is common when relocating to another culture to experience culture shock. For a year or so everything seems strange, unpredictable and confusing, which all make life frustrating and frequently unhappy. There is a yearning for the home country and familiar customs, food, goods, names and places. It would be accurate to state that in a foreign land one's life does not have the same meaning and one's coping mechanisms are severely challenged. But in time one adjusts and settles down to a meaningful, contented and fulfilling existence. The problem

really comes when one tries to downplay or remove one's foreignness and become totally one with the new country – its people, traditions, customs and practices. In the light of Chapter 5, this cutting off of all or of a major part of one's culture seems to tamper with one's primary identity. The only hope for a fulfilling and growing existence in another country is to keep and treasure all that was built into one that gave one meaning and the ability to develop into adulthood, and add the experiences and enriching customs of the new land. This is a parallel to the situation when Africans are converted. They should keep their cultures essentially intact and so stay Africans in their Christian walk, but enrich their African culture and lives with Christian values and direction and thereby experience a fuller humanity and growth in every area of faith and life.

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### 3.2 The relationship between the supracultural and the cultural in Christianity

Does the working out of Christianity in every culture mean that there is a different brand of Christianity in every culture? Clearly 'No', because there is only one Gospel. Further, because Christianity respects and works in local cultures, this puts pay to the concept of a *universal homogeneous Christian culture – a supraculture that replaces the convert's culture*. Christians have to 'express their faith and ethics within a particular culture and society. There is no separate 'kingdom culture' ' (The New People Next Door 2004). 'He [God] does not wish simply to destroy the values of our culture or any culture and replace it with a "Christian" culture. Rather, he wants to add to and redirect our values' (Hopler and Hopler 1993:15). However, one can talk about *Christian cultures* where Christianity is expressed through the neutral and purified parts of the culture and where those parts that are incompatible with Christianity and therefore irredeemable are discarded. The purification of culture does not change the culture, except those parts that cannot be purified. The answer 'No' to the question at the beginning of this paragraph is supported by the fact that cultural differences in the New Testament are taken for granted (they are there and will not disappear) and are not barriers to Christ's work and Christian fellowship in a multicultural local church. This all means the Gospel is supra-cultural, i.e. the source of the Gospel is Christ who came from outside of humanity and its cultures. This also explains why the Gospel can be understood and experienced in every culture and not just one. But clearly in the light of their additional new overarching supra-identity, Christians have a new relationship to their cultures. But not as Tertullian states: 'Christians constitute a "third race," different from Jews and Gentiles, and called to live a way of life quite separate from culture' (cited in Carson 2008:13).

Christians' new loyalty to God, his Son and Christian ethics means those aspects of their cultures that are incompatible with Christianity cannot be countenanced. But we have seen that the Christian continues in his/her culture, but without syncretism. If it is correct, as argued above, that 'Man [sic] is inseparable from culture' (Moyo cited in de Jongh 2005:142), then it is completely logical and vital that Christianity would be experienced through one's culture. Thus 'faithfulness to Jesus and faithfulness to one's culture are not incompatible obligations' (Mugambi cited in de Jongh 2005:143). This means that the Christian Jew remains essentially a Jew and the Christian Gentile essentially retains his/her brand of 'Gentileness.' An African Christian is still an African, a European Christian is still a European, an Asian Christian is still an Asian, etc. Therefore cultures must not be compared in order to prove which one is superior to another, something that is foreign to the Gospel. Though cultures are different, all serve the same function. The picture of a white Jesus was used 'to propagate the thought that the ways of Europe and Euro-America were normative and superior to other cultural perspectives' (DeYoung 1995:46). Depictions of Jesus were 'everywhere European, from the artwork and literature in bookstores to the fourteen stations of the cross in Roman Catholic Churches' (Pollard 1995:29). But in fact Jesus would have been closer to persons of colour (cf DeYoung 1995:34-47). One's skin colour is irrelevant to salvation. If Jesus had been born into a black Israel he would have had a black skin. Those who promoted a white Jesus should have had a mindset that was not white but human (:62). To use Jesus' supposed white skin as a weapon against a major part of the human race is a form of blasphemy because that section also shares the image of God. Cultural diversity, a range of skin colours, and other physical differences would be expected of a God who loves variety (cf e.g. the flowers and animals and the earth's topography). Brand and Yancey (1980:32) capture this side of God aptly:

It seems safe to assume that God enjoys variety, and not just at the cellular level. ... He lavished color, design, and texture on the world, giving us Pygmies and Watusis, blond Scandinavians and swarthy Italians, big-boned Russians and petite Japanese. ... I have learned that when God looks upon His Body, spread like an archipelago throughout the world, He sees the whole thing. And I think He, understanding the cultural backgrounds and true intent of the worshipers, *likes the variety he sees* (emphasis added).

As noted above, imagine how boring the human race would be if people were all the same, e.g. all Chinese with the same skin colour, eye shape, black straight hair and culture. The greatness of God's creation is therefore also seen in a human race of incredible diversity. Brand and Yancey (:33) state that the joy of the one Church 'increases as individual cells [members of Christ] realize they can be diverse without becoming isolated outposts.'

‘As Christians we have the unique privilege and task that we do not merely have to weigh the one [culture] against the other [culture], but that we should be able to evaluate each critically from a third, higher perspective, the Word of God, and to try to move to the point where we may share the same cultural values’ (van der Walt 1997:99). When Christians from different cultures share a common Gospel and common cultural values, these commonalities will not be expressed in exactly the same way. The writer has seen this exemplified in the area of worship at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape. African and Western students sing praise songs in markedly different ways. The African students sing louder, involve their bodies dynamically, clap and move rhythmically, often close their eyes, sing in parts, prefer spontaneous choice of songs, display greater passion in their singing, and repeat songs with increasing feeling, enthusiasm, freedom and joy, and have an unplanned leader who leads the singers into the next verse and decides how many times the song is repeated. The Western students sing softly and sedately, in unison, without any body movement, don’t usually start songs spontaneously, and find repeating songs boring. Both groups of students have the same Christian faith, are committed to singing praises in corporate worship, believe the words of the songs, and sing to the same God. The differences clearly reflect different cultural styles of worship. This supports the conclusion above that ‘Christianity always assumes a particular cultural shape’ (van der Walt 1997:122) and this is to be expected and honoured in local churches.

Living in a multicultural society like South Africa’s prompted a tertiary student to make the following suggestion: ‘We can polish each other like diamonds. Let us fuse all the positive elements and constitute a positive South African culture of which each South African can be proud’ (cited in van der Walt 1997:108). However, as long as worldviews and cultures differ this project can only have limited success. Further, it has been argued above that cultural distinctives need to be respected, accommodated, not undermined, ignored or destroyed. In any case, such a South African culture would build on the different cultures, so that the original cultures and their accompanying cultural-ethnic identities would essentially remain. It is enough to have a common citizenship, e.g. South African, for unity at a state/country level. Cultural diversity is natural, important and healthy for society and its development as noted in Chapter 2.

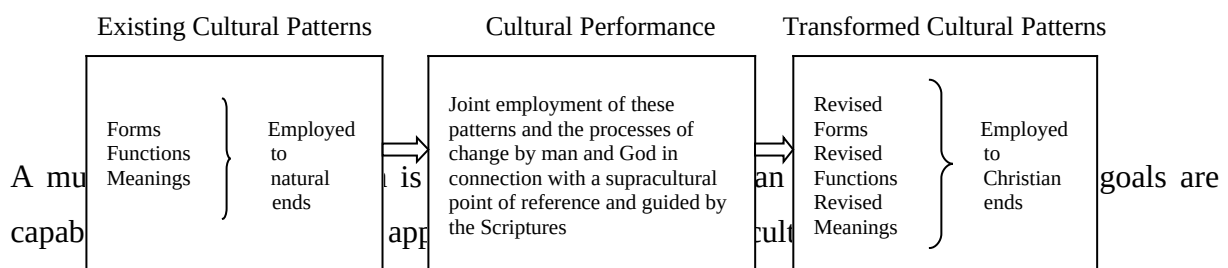
Nicholls (1979:78-80) sees the transformation of the Christian’s solidarity in Adam to solidarity in Christ as ‘the Christian hope for a new society and a new culture’ (:79-80). However, as noted above, this newness based on the supra-cultural elements of Christianity does not undermine the different cultures of God’s people. Kretzschmar (1995d:50) rightly notes that ‘being “in Christ” is primary and being a “Jew or Gentile” is secondary.’ The hope



of full redemption will be perfectly fulfilled at Christ's return when earth's cultures become pristine vehicles for expressing glorified (perfected) humanity and human activity.

Kraft (1979:103-115) discusses God's attitude in the Bible towards culture and concludes that he 'views human culture primarily as a vehicle to be used by him and his people for Christian purposes, rather than as an enemy to be combated or shunned' (103). Fiedler (cited in Mtuze 2003:36) similarly states that any culture must not be destroyed because it is the very social organism which was 'designed by God to be the vessel to receive the gospel.' Clement of Alexandria in similar vein states that Christ 'is not against culture, but uses its best products as instruments in his work of bestowing on men what they cannot achieve by their own efforts' (cited in Carson 2008:21). Niebuhr (cited in Carson 2008:28) sees culture in the eschatological age as 'the redemption of the created and corrupted human world and the transformation of mankind in all its cultural activity.'

The Gospel has a distinct worldview, which means the convert's worldview has to be changed where it clashes with the biblical worldview. Since worldview shapes culture, this means that certain elements in the convert's cultural context have also to be discarded or changed. Though this entails changes in the convert's culture, the previous culture will largely remain, through which the Christian faith will be expressed and experienced. There 'will be a measure of similarity' between cultures of Christians, but this will have more to do with Christian beliefs and ethics, and not so much their cultural forms of expression. Kraft (1979:114) captures the relationship between culture and the Gospel in the following diagram:



The translatability of the Gospel into various cultural forms is one of the special features of Christianity. ... although Christian values will at some points diverge from societal norms, there needs to be enough overlap for Christianity to be experienced as part of what it means to be identified with a particular cultural group. ... Although the Gospel is always "clothed" in culturally specific forms and cannot exist apart from particular forms, universal values of love, human worth, and honouring the transcendent are at the heart of the Gospel in any culture (Adeney 2007:33).

However, Christian fellowship is not fully possible unless there can be language communication.

### 3.3 The New Testament church's struggle to be multicultural

The Jews living in and around Jerusalem had the following pecking order: 'Palestinian Jews were on top, followed by the Diaspora Jews (principally Hellenists), with proselytes and God-fearers next, and Samaritans (whom Jews regarded as heretics) and Gentiles at the bottom' (Hopler and Hopler 1993:65-66). It is against this background that Hopler and Hopler (:66-93) trace the cultural myopia during the days of the Apostles in the Book of Acts (1993:66-93), a summary of which now follows. In his Pentecost sermon Peter only addresses 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem' (Acts 2:14). Then there was the rift between the Aramaic-speaking Palestinians and the Greek-speaking Hellenistic Jews. The Samaritans probably only received the Spirit when Peter and John laid hands on them to prove to the apostles that they were genuinely part of the church (see below). In Acts 10 we find God breaking through the church's preoccupation with the requirement of Jewish culture for Gentile converts. The Jerusalem Council was needed to finally establish that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised and put themselves under the Jewish practices and Old Testament laws. The Judaizers had elevated their Jewish culture to the point where 'coming to God was a cultural process, a civilizing process manifest in a change of behavior [i.e. new behaviour according to the Old Testament]. ... They had no way of conceptualizing how a heathen could believe in God through any other means – including Jesus Christ' (:81). One cannot but see a repeat in Africa of the Judaizers' championing of their racial, cultural and spiritual superiority. The Jerusalem Council's decision showed that 'Ethnicity is thus legitimized without being absolutized. ... The very nature of the gospel implies that we take, with equal seriousness, both cultural specificity and cultural relativity' (Ramachandra 1994:2). Paul in his ministry to the Gentiles combated the inbred belief and cultural bias that to join the people of God one had to be first circumcised and embrace the full Jewish law, thus showing that Jewish Christians were not to impose their particular cultural patterns on the new Gentile converts. There is thus a 'crucial difference between Christian conversion and religious proselytism' (Peskett and Ramachandra 2003:78). God's church was to be a multicultural community.

Some have argued that the delay in the Samaritans receiving the Holy Spirit is the norm for all Christians (Kisau 2006:1314). If this is correct then the delay in the reception of the Spirit is unrelated to the early church's difficulty in accepting people from another culture. Kisau (:1314) however agrees with Hopler and Hopler: 'The answer seems to be that there were exceptional circumstances in this case, meaning that it should not be taken as typical.' These unique circumstances had to do with the fact that the 'Jews and Samaritans did not normally mix' because there was 'great hostility and bitter rivalry between them' (:1314). It seems the

delay in receiving the Spirit until John came was therefore intended or needed to demonstrate that without first becoming full Jews, Samaritan Christians belonged to the one church. Here cultural integrity is safeguarded. Hopler and Hopler (1993:71) note that the Jerusalem Church never sent another delegation to the Samaritan believers, but rather allowed them ‘to continue to grow and develop as an indigenous movement’.

### 3.4 Relationships in the world between Christians and non-Christians

Christians have traditionally related to unbelievers in society in different ways: (i) only contact in the area of work where essential (as little contact as possible) – Christians are not of the world (pietism); (ii) contact at work, in some sports, and through love of neighbours – Christians are not of the world, but engaged in the world (piety); and (iii) contact in nearly every area of life – in the world and of the world (liberalism).

The early Christians did not ‘cut themselves off from the wider world. Paul recognized that even to try to do so was fruitless (1 Cor. 5:10). They were very much members of the wider non-Christian society whilst at the same time they were ever conscious of the need to keep pure even whilst living within it’ (Tidball 1983:111). In the section on discipleship in Chapter 4 it is noted that Christians are to love and serve their non-Christian neighbours and be salt and light in the world; also they are to have a good testimony with unbelievers. Being part of the new humanity in Christ does not change one’s physical, family and social needs. The Christian shares in the same humanity as his non-Christian neighbour, except that its capacity for godly, righteous living is radically changed. The Bible is clear that Christians are to foster extensive interactions with unbelievers in society and exercise a positive influence through their lives and working for greater righteousness and justice in society (see Chapter 6). Christians are also to respect and submit to the state when it is fulfilling God’s ordained role, however imperfectly.

Clearly Christians are to pursue their Christian lives in their societies (2 Cor 10:3). However, the New Testament repeatedly urges Christians to hate the world and not be part of it. This raises the question of the relationship of the ‘world’ and ‘culture.’ Niebuhr (cited in Carson 2008:11) according to Carson defines the biblical use of the word ‘world’ in terms of culture: ‘Culture ... [is what] the New Testament writers frequently had in mind when they spoke of “the world”...[this] is what we mean when we speak of culture.’ Does this then mean that loyalty to Christ and fellow Christians must involve the rejection of culture? This would contradict all that has been argued above concerning the place and importance of culture for human life and human identity. Carson (:12) sees the world in terms of something like ‘culture-devoid-of-Christ.’ As argued above, Carson (:63) notes that ‘Christians constitute an

identifiable part of any particular culture.’ He (:64) harmonizes being in the world and not of the world as follows: ‘On the one hand, we belong to the broader culture in which we find ourselves; on the other, we belong to the culture of the consummated kingdom of God, which has dawned among us.’ He (:227) quotes Elshtain, who puts this ambivalent relationship to culture slightly differently: ‘we must see Christ against *and* for, agonistic *and* affirming, arguing *and* embracing. This is complex but, then, Christianity is no stranger to complexity.’ If human life is a panorama of varied cultures, then it is the sinful elements and sinful misuse of cultures that are to be avoided by the Christian, not culture *per se* (except those features irreconcilable to the Gospel). Any traditions, ideologies, systems and behaviour that are inspired by Satan and/or the sinful nature constitute the world from which the Christian is to be separated. It is ‘the world of those who are devoted to sinful lives ... degraded, corrupt pagan society’ (Ladd 1993:643). It is with reference to this world that Christians ‘are to regard themselves as aliens and exiles’ (:643). ‘Christians live in this age [world], but their life pattern, their standard of conduct, their aims and goals are not those of this age [world], which are essentially human-centered and prideful’ (:569). ‘Nonconformity to this age means neither asceticism nor a rejection of the social mores of the world, but a rejection of its idolatry and sinful conduct. The Christian is both a citizen of her or his own culture and a citizen of the Age to Come at one and the same time’ (:571). Christians in the light of Philippians 3:20 are ‘a colony of foreigners whose organization reflects their native homeland [heaven]’ (:586).

Niebuhr is well-known for his writings on the relationship between *Christ* and *culture*. He posits five possibilities: Christ *against* culture; the Christ *of* culture; Christ *above* culture; Christ and culture in *paradox*; and Christ as *transformer* of culture (cited in Hesselgrave 1991:116). Carson (2008:13-29) discusses Niebuhr’s analysis of the Christ-culture relationship (see also Pazmino 1997:167-168). In Christ *against* culture, culture’s claims to loyalty to Christ are rejected; in Christ *of* culture, Christ fulfils the best hopes and aspirations of society, a position that weakens the believer’s grasp of Christian truth; in Christ *above* culture, there is a gap between culture and Christ, though Christ is sovereign over culture and the church; but this gap can be misunderstood, confusing the relationship between Christ and culture; Christ and culture in *paradox* is dualism where there is a line between God and all mankind; one cannot get out of culture that is sick, and yet God sustains one in and by it; finally, Christ the *transformer* of culture has to do with the conversion of culture rather than actual changes. It is not always easy to grasp what Niebuhr is saying; he certainly can complicate the discussion about Christ and culture. In the light of this Chapter so far it seems

there is some truth in most of these categories, perhaps all of them, but especially in Christ the *transformer* of culture. McGavran (cited in Hesselgrave 1991:120) believes that a *high view of the Bible* and a *high view of culture* best sums up the relationship between Christ and culture – it harmonizes most closely with the above discussion on Christ and culture. Niebuhr's tackling of the relationship between Christ and culture has reminded theologians that this relationship requires careful thought and is crucial for understanding the place and function of culture in human existence, and especially in Christian living in a fallen world in which all cultures have been affected by the Fall. This impacts the understanding of the 'world' to which the Christian is to be crucified.

Kuhn (cited in Mugabe 1995b:17) brings out the areas of newness in the convert's new life which need to be safeguarded in the Christian's life within this age and world: 'Conversion means a 'turning' away from old ways towards new ways, a basic reorientation in premises and goals, a whole-hearted acceptance of a new set of values affecting the 'convert' as well as his social group, day in and day out, 24 hours of the day in practically every sphere of activity ... economic, social and religious.'

### 3.5 Conclusion

It has been shown that Christians are to be rooted 'in Christ' and also in culture. This means that the Gospel is to be heard and lived in one's culture. 'Spirituality is built onto culture and embedded in it' (Fresen 2000:184). 'Since the only tangible vehicle of the gospel and religious concepts are our cultures, these must be taken seriously' (Mazibuko 1989:200). Section 3 of this Chapter emphasized the importance of one's culture in Christian living and ministry, something many white church leaders working in Africa apparently still have to learn. The Church is being restored in the image of God/Christ without her members being separated from their different cultures. However, it has been made clear that those aspects of culture that have been affected by sin need to be transformed or rejected if they cannot be reformed; this is essential if Christ is to be Lord in the Christian's life and if there is to be growth 'into conformity to the image of Christ' (Nicholls 1979:80). Christians in mission are 'to adapt and transform the symbolic forms of other cultures and give to them new meaning so that they become the bearers of the word of God' (Nicholls 1979:81).

'The lifestyle of the universal Church ought to be a model of Christ-centred cultures which are both universal in their expression and at the same time rooted in the historic cultural situations of each particular people' (Nicholls 1979:80). De Young (1995:153) succinctly and powerfully captures the relationship of Christ to culture: 'Christ embraces, critiques, and transcends all cultures.' Sadly we are only now 'beginning to realise that Christianity can

assume many cultural shapes, such as for example, a Western or African shape' (van der Walt 1997:94). Because African culture has many additions and adaptations due to Western cultural imperialism, it needs a double de-culturalization: 'the de-culturalization of western accretions but also of indigenous culture concepts that are contrary to the word of God' (Nicholls 1979:82). In transforming a culture, the Gospel also 'brings with it new elements in [the] culture' (:82).

#### **4. Summary and Conclusion**

Culture is foundational to humanity – without culture there can be no true humanity or human expression. 'It is the creator's will not only that human beings should live in communities and *cultural* homes, but that from their homes they should be able to engage peaceably with those of other communities' (O'Donovan cited in Peskett and Ramachandra 2003:121, emphasis added). Sadly this has all too often not been a reality in a fallen world; instead different cultures have been the cause of much unhappiness, conflict and division. It is possible to speak of certain aspects of a culture as being more advanced than others in a technical-scientific sense. But it seems an exaggeration to claim that a particular culture is superior to other cultures. This is, firstly, because all cultures are the natural and intended result of creation (Hesselgrave 1991:103-104), namely to make sense of the world, to interact with the total environment and rule it to meet human needs, and to nurture and sustain community. 'Culture is a design for living. It is a plan according to which society adapts itself to its physical, social, and ideational environment' (Hesselgrave 1991:100). This universal function of culture explains the remarkable similarities among the different cultures – 'cultural universals' (du Toit 2002:87). Secondly, because all cultures are influenced and shaped by geographical and climatic conditions, it is to be expected that they will differ. The rise of anthropological thought 'revealed the relativity and contextuality of all cultures (including those of the West)' (Bosch 1991:450). Thirdly, since all cultures have been affected by sin it is unwise to claim superiority for one's culture. Every culture is 'the arena of [both] continued divine and Satanic intervention and penetration' (Hesselgrave 1991:104). 'God, in his concern for all people, has allowed truth to infiltrate every culture' (Hopler and Hopler 1993:62). 'Culture is ... always a strange complex of truth and error, beauty and ugliness, good and evil, seeking God and rebelling against him' (Nicholls 1979:78). Fourthly, there is 'no perfectly good or wholly evil culture' (van der Walt 1997:99). Mtuze (2003:103) notes that 'African culture, like all cultures, has its good points and its bad points.' Van der Walt (1997:99) records that 'African culture had ... revealed very positive traits as a result of God's "general"

revelation ... Western culture is increasingly becoming secularised. Therefore traditional African culture cannot simply be called “barbaric” and Western culture described as “civilized.” Fifthly, no culture is “the way,” but only “a way” (Hesselgrave 1991:105). Sixthly, ‘The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture’ (Lausanne Covenant cited in Hesselgrave 1991:119). On this basis Western civilization would probably reflect a poorer culture than Africa’s culture. Seventhly, Hesselgrave (:189) notes that there are elements that occur in all cultures showing that cultures are more similar than one realises: worldviews, cognitive processes, languages, behavioural patterns, social structures, media usages and motivations of people. So there is only one genre of culture. Eighthly, each culture ‘may have some special contribution to make to our common task of coming to terms with life’s mysteries’ (Kaufman cited in Pityana 1995:172). Tshishiku (cited in Shilenga 2005:205) points out the strengths of European, American and African cultures respectively: speculative rationalism, pragmatism, and spiritualist realism (no separation of spiritual values and technical activities). Thus no culture is to be despised and each one has something to contribute to the world. Ninthly, cultural variety can be seen as a positive thing: ‘We can rejoice in our diversity because together we reflect the boundless creativity of our God’ (Hopler and Hopler 1993:20). This Chapter so far has shown that it is misplaced to draw a wedge between other cultures and one specific culture with the latter ‘being used in exclusively oppressive and negative terms’ (Pityana 1995:169) – the dominant culture must not become ‘hegemonic and universalized – imposing “consensus” on its own terms’ (Rosaldo cited in Pityana 1995:170). If there was ‘less emphasis on the distinctiveness of one culture from another than on the meaning and significance of culture’ (Pityana 1995:169), there would be less prejudice against other cultures.

It has been argued above that the Christian’s new identity flows from being in Christ and his church, the new humanity (but yet to be perfected). Further, it takes priority over all other identities, but does not cancel them. ‘The eschatological character of [the church] ... carries with it the fact that it cuts across our normal human sociological structures. Race does not matter; social status does not matter’ (Ladd 1993:588). ‘Culture is not the center of the Bible; Christ is’ (Hopler and Hopler 1984:91). It was concluded above that just as variety in nature adds to its beauty and appeal, so the same is true with the rainbow human race; also that the church’s cultural and racial diversity, rightly approached, enriches Christians and enables the universal church to grow in understanding of the Scriptures and how to live to the glory of

God. As Ramachandra (1994:2) puts it: ‘a partnership that involves thoughtful, mutual listening among Christians from every tradition and culture within the worldwide church is indispensable for mission.’ Even in South Africa this principle of the value of variety in the human race has been grasped by some at last: ‘Where cultural diversity had formerly been seen as rather an embarrassment [in the old S.A.] – even a threat – it now offers opportunities for mutual growth and enrichment’ (van der Walt 1997:94). If Christians remember that they have the same Christian supra-identity, and if they have the correct understanding of culture, different cultures should not be a stumbling block to deep and satisfying fellowship and unity among Christians of different cultures.

The person converted to Christ takes on a Christian identity. This identity is therefore common to Christians all over the world, and is the Christian’s *overriding new supra-identity*. This Christian identity flows from the fact that all Christians are part of one world-wide body/group known as the Universal Church – the ‘Body of Christ,’ the ‘Church of God,’ the ‘Bride of Christ’ – which is a new human race. Clearly the Christian’s identity is therefore not to be understood primarily in ‘terms of racial, cultural, national or lineage categories, but in Jesus Christ himself’ (Bediako 1990:14). This is good news for Africans who have been viewed by whites through the lens of prejudice and superiority as an inferior race with an inferior culture. The church is meant to break down all barriers to unity, especially cultural barriers, but without eliminating cultures. The church ‘transcends all boundaries, cultures, and languages’ (Bosch 1991:435). The universal church is the only entity in the world where racial, gender, cultural, linguistic, social and all other barriers can, and should, be overcome. The Body of Christ is God’s answer to a divided world – to alienated and antagonistic individuals, groups, tribes and nations.

It has been demonstrated that human identity is closely linked with culture and the associated cultural/ethnic group rather than abstractly to the human race; and therefore a healthy identity cannot be divorced from one’s culture. It can be concluded that the greatest cause of Africa’s crises and devastating problems has been the centuries of belittled self-identity and crushed self-worth, resulting from the terribly negative approach to the African peoples (‘race’) and their cultural milieu. Christian discipleship needs to restore the African’s identity so that Africa can reach its full potential. The African Renaissance is the secular approach to solving this need, so vital for development in Africa. Speckman (2006) interprets Acts 3:1-10 from a development point of view. He shows that the beggar’s healing, which significantly included healing of his self-worth, was the trigger to him becoming self-dependent and the Christian community becoming politically and socially more active and able to meet their material



needs. His application to Africa as ‘a borrowing and dependent nation’ (:283) is to transform its ‘vision of liberation into a vision of development’ (:243). It is interesting to see his emphasis on identity healing as a priority because it is a prerequisite to economic and social development and independency. This means for Africans they must not be ‘men and women “living at two levels” – half African and half European – but never belonging properly to either’ (Bediako 1990:12). A divided, confused identity can never be a healthy, strong one so necessary for a positive, confident self-worth, which in turn is vital for maximum initiative, functioning, and achievement. Kretzschmar (1995d:49) brings this out as follows: ‘if we do not go much further than we already have in the journey to our true selves, and a redeemed form of self love, we will never love God or our neighbour in anything other than an empty and superficial way.’

It has been seen, and needs stressing, that the Church on earth and in heaven is made up of people from ‘every tribe and language and people and nation’ (Rev 5:9). Carson (2008:74-75) concludes from this passage that life in the new heavens and earth will embrace not only ‘glorious unity’, but also ‘equally glorious diversity of race and nation *and language*’ ‘The reference to nations, tribes, peoples, tongues is repeated seven times in Revelation, each time in a different order. John wants to make his point absolutely clear’ (The New People Next Door 2004). This means that every Christian carries his/her *racial and cultural identity eternally*. In a Lausanne Occasional Paper, *The Pasadena Consultation – Homogeneous Unit Principle* (1978), this truth is powerfully presented: ‘These biblical phrases [e.g. Rev 7:9-10, 21:26] seem to us to warrant the conviction that heaven will be adorned by the best products of God-given human creativity, that heavenly fellowship will be harmonious and heterogeneous, and that the diversity of languages and cultures will not inhibit but rather ennoble the fellowship of the redeemed.’ Clearly cultural variety brings enrichment to the universal church in this world and in the world to come. Culture reflects the God-given capacity to survive and even thrive in a world of unbelievably varied conditions and challenges and thus honours God and should result in his praise. This diversity of culture and experience has another important function, namely, that believers in different cultures approach the Bible from different perspectives – from their unique existential situation. This ensures a comprehensive approach to the interpretation of Scripture that provides a fuller and more accurate interpretation. Christians throughout the world ‘need one another in their search for truth’ (Sundermeier 1990:267). DeYoung (1995) argues in his book for a multiculturalist approach to biblical interpretation: ‘We need more than ever before to unite on a multiculturalist search for truth in which the strengths and contributions of all people

finally receive their due. Biblically we need to bring “new eyes” to ancient texts’ (:7). Or as Sundermeier (1990:264) puts it: ‘We need the intercultural diversity of methods in order to discover the richness of the text’; the insights of Christians from other cultures ‘challenge, enrich, and invigorate’ one’s understanding. So, together with other methods of interpretation in evangelical circles, ‘cultural’ exegesis makes possible a fuller understanding of Scripture. As an evangelical, the writer does not see cultural hermeneutics as meaning that cultures today determine the meaning of a biblical text and that any interpretation of a text is valid. Cultural hermeneutics helps broaden the basis for analysing the text and applying it in different cultural contexts.

The challenge to the Church is to fully appreciate, practise and enjoy its plural identities: the new supra-identity and the cultural identities. This means embracing all Christians throughout the world as true brothers and sisters in true family love and respect, unashamedly and humbly embracing one’s own culture, and appreciating, respecting and benefiting from the other cultures in the church and world. The early Jewish church battled here – it tried to force its culture on non-Jewish converts. The Church today has the same struggle; but it has the advantage of the completed Scriptures and twenty centuries of church history from which to learn. God will judge today’s churches according to this extensive experience and knowledge; and this reality should provoke the churches today to operate with a healthy sense of fear – a fear of disappointing God, of alienating non-Christians from the Gospel, of preventing other Christians from entering into the highest possible experience of their Christian worship and life through cultural and racial bigotry, and of loss of eternal rewards.

The Church has the answers to an increasingly multicultural world. Academics and politicians can pontificate about how to create an ideal society, make good laws, but cannot provide an authoritative universal system of ethics and the necessary spiritual dynamic to live by such ethics. Carson (2008:225) notes this: ‘You cannot make men [sic] good by law; and without good men you cannot have a good society.’ This was clearly recognized by Nelson Mandela when president of South Africa. Referring to the corruption in government at provincial and local levels he said, ‘Little did we expect ... that our own people, when they got the chance, would be as corrupt as the apartheid regime’ (cited in Guest 2004:232). It is the true Church that alone is able through the new birth, the indwelling Holy Spirit, loving members, to give the world a taste of the eschatological future God will one day usher in. The story of the Church has its glorious chapters, but too many disappointing and tragic ones, e.g. the acceptance of apartheid by most white churches in South Africa. If the Church in South

Africa is faithful to its mandate and calling, it will be able to showcase multiracial and multicultural churches that will affect society for the good and vividly demonstrate that the answer for Africa is the Gospel. If the church can bring together worship, evangelism and justice, it would regain its lost voice.

Brand and Yancey (1980:31) highlight the key to discovering that fellowship and unity between Christians of different cultures is truly possible and edifying : ‘But over ... years I have been profoundly – and humbly – impressed that I find God in the faces of my fellow worshipers by sharing with people who are shockingly different from each other and from me.’ The crucial word is ‘sharing.’

The amazing function of culture has been high-lighted in this Chapter. This understanding is clearly necessary for effective discipleship in the African church.

## **5. The application of this chapter to the African evangelical churches**

### **5.1 Definition of an African**

Before proceeding with a more detailed application of this Chapter to the African Church, it is important to first clarify what is meant by the term ‘African.’ Before the 20th century there were few inhabitants in Africa that thought of themselves as ‘Africans.’ But can all peoples living in eastern, central, western and southern Africa be termed ‘African’? ‘Africans are ... variously tall and short, heavily built and slender, dark- and light-skinned ... speak a dizzying variety of languages. ... in the region of 1,500 ... have forged a multiplicity of cultures. ... believe in ... a large number of religions. ... have been members of a varied set of state forms’ (Parker and Rathbone 2007:26-27; also Davidson 1991:71). These differences, however, have not prevented the idea of an ‘African’ and its acceptance. Africa’s experience of colonialism and its fight for liberation have probably done more than anything else to unite black Africa and thus create the concept of an ‘African,’ which is also used in international parlance. Parker and Rathbone (2007:36,34) note that ‘a singular African civilization’ has been ‘a key feature of the perceptions of outsiders and, over the last two centuries, of Africans.’ The term ‘African’ is analogous to the term ‘European,’ which describes people with similar physical features and cultures. Since blacks in Africa see themselves as essentially one race and culture, the dissertation accepts this understanding and position.

Sadly, as noted above, the African identity has suffered distortion (Nkesiga 2005:62) by Africans being considered ‘inherently and naturally less than human ... beings of a somehow subhuman, nonhuman nature’ (Davidson cited in Nkesiga 2005:63). These myths paved the way for cultural oppression, economic exploitation, political subjugation (Nkesiga 2005:111),

and the ‘justification of slavery ... culminating in the underlying evil of racism’ (:87). As stated above, the African Renaissance ‘can be summed up as one major quest for the recovery [renewal] of the distorted identity of Africans’ (:71) – a recovery of ‘a sense of self-worth’ (:76). In the apartheid years ‘black inferiority had been pushed to its extreme as the racist government (1948-1994) entrenched laws that denied basic human rights to the black people’ (:79). Nkesiga (:112) states that a clear self-identity and sound moral orientation are linked; that therefore the destruction of the African’s self-identity is one of the reasons why there has been ‘societal disorientation of many African communities’ – a lack of moral strength and inner dynamic, especially in its leaders. Africans have not only suffered poor self-identity, but also the break-up of stable traditional communities, which also has weakened morality. Clearly discipleship in Africa must not leave the curing of a weak self-identity to the African Renaissance alone, but play an influential role in healing the African identity through the Gospel and appropriate pastoral discipleship. Africans, like all other humans, ‘are to be treated as having an essential value that is neither given ... nor can it be taken away by human beings’ (Peskest and Ramachandra 2003:39). Nürnberger (2007:7) shows the need for an African identity that captures the old and new worlds: ‘thoroughly contemporary, yet integrates the African heritage in a new package.’ Thabo Mbeki exemplifies this position. The world waits to see what Africans will achieve if their human and cultural identities can be healed.

A new situation is now facing whites in Africa, particularly South Africa. They are becoming a growing minority with very little political power, which has limited their economic power. L’Ange (2005) has written a book entitled *The White Africans – from Colonization to Liberation*. The whites have attempted ‘overlaying an African identity on their European cultural inheritance. They were Africans and yet were not Africans. They were Africans by reason of their birth, and in many cases long ancestry, in Africa. But they were Europeans not only in physical appearance but also in language, habits, traditions, music, dance and other culture’ (:246-247). Due to the whites’ ambivalence towards Africans and their culture, blacks have not taken to the term white African (cf :500). Clearly many whites are experiencing an identity crisis with the reversal of their political power and dominance. As L’Ange (:488) notes, after 1994 ‘the whites in South Africa were left in a situation oddly analogous with that of the blacks in the United States. Both were minorities in a society politically dominated by people of a different race, and whose culture they were required to adopt, or adapt to, despite it being dissimilar to that of their own forefathers.’ L’Ange (:488, 503) predicts that in Africa the blacks will become ever more Westernized and the whites ever more Africanized and

eventually the whites will due to eroding of ancestral links to Europe be drawn into timeless Africa and cease to be white Africans. In the light of Chapter 5 the writer would argue that both blacks and whites need to be comfortable in their own cultural identities, but be open to cultural ‘borrowing’ where this will enrich living. Because the achievements of a people depend largely on a strong cultural identity, it would serve Africa better therefore if whites find their unity with blacks at a multicultural level and as common citizens. The writer believes that the strengths of Western and African cultures are both needed and acculturation is thus not the best solution to any identity crisis in Africa. The writer has applied the term ‘white African’ to himself among his black students and black friends to emphasize his respect for Africa’s people and cultures and his at-homeness in Africa and the belief that a combination of African and Western cultures provides the best mix to face the century ahead. ‘Together, in a shared journey, our weaknesses can be reduced whilst our strengths can be enhanced. Separated, we remain weak and incomplete’ (Kretzschmar 1995:51). Clearly ‘white African’ and ‘African’ are terms that will remain ‘pretty much a matter of opinion’ (L’Ange 2005:502). It is understandable that whites who have five or so generations of ancestry in Africa could argue that they ‘have a stronger ... claim to be called African than a black person of seven generations in the United States or Haiti’; however, ‘The issue may of course be of less importance to black Africans secure in their identity than to white ones still establishing theirs’ (:502).

## 5.2 An African evangelical Christian

It has been argued that the Gospel is universal and to be expressed through one’s culture. Therefore it expects African converts to continue being African after conversion. Some may argue that this is not possible as Christianity excludes most of the ancestral cult. This matter is also touched on below and in Chapter 6 where it is argued that when in Christ one’s humanity reaches a higher level and one’s culture is purified and stripped of those sinful features that demean one and provoke a righteous, holy and jealous God. There should be no confusion about the black convert’s cultural identity when faced with Western culture as is the case with the following black Christian students: ‘Should I become a Westerner and abandon my culture or remain an African and not keep up with the times? I need an idea of who I am!’ Another student said that ‘he felt and acted like a Westerner on the “outside” but on the “inside” (deep in his heart) he felt himself to be an African.’ ‘Let’s document the remnants of our culture to help future generations not to be in a worse state of confusion.’ ‘I can only say that I do not know where I stand or what is going to happen to me in future because of my

mixed feelings.’ (van der Walt 1997:110-116.) Van der Walt (:125) notes that of all the groups of students he interviewed (blacks, coloureds, white Afrikaners and English-speaking whites), ‘not one of the groups were willing to fully exchange their own culture for the other, but wanted to achieve a kind of balance between the two.’ The balance needed is recognition of one’s own culture and that culture borrowing is fine and desirable and does not involve tampering with one’s cultural identity. The New Testament does not present true and mature Christians as battling with an identity crisis; although aware of their new overriding supra-identity, they are comfortable with their cultural identity. Again it needs to be stated that a true evangelical African should not have an identity crisis – his/her Christian and cultural identities should effectively merge into one identity. If this were not the case the New Testament testimony of Christians without an identity crisis would be suspect; further it would mean Christians would experience a kind of schizophrenia. Once again a desperate need for discipleship in the African church emerges that understands the Christ-culture relationship.

Van der Walt (1997:111) summarizes his findings of black tertiary students with respect to the crisis precipitated by the clash of Western and African cultures and worldviews in South Africa: ‘In spite of the fact that most of them are Christians, it would seem that it would be difficult for *most* to discard their faith in ancestors without ending up with an identity crisis’ (emphasis added). This conclusion is interesting for it demonstrates that it is possible for some black Christians to relinquish their beliefs about the ancestors and the accompanying rites without an identity crisis. In other words their racial-cultural identity is still African. This is what the New Testament teaching implies should be the case even though many aspects of the ancestral cult cannot be harmonised with the Gospel and need to be jettisoned. The other striking part of van der Walt’s conclusion is that most black Christians feel they cannot be African and reject the traditions regarding the ancestors. It is a dilemma when ‘followers of Christ can neither fully endorse their cultures nor reject them altogether’ (Pityana 1995:176).

In practice, the ancestors have no influence on many aspects of everyday life, e.g. manners, food/diet, ways of eating, love of communication and its style, music and singing, language, architecture and décor, clothes, child-rearing methods, embracing of ubuntu (perhaps not everything it stands for), putting people first, etc. Christianity does not claim that the deceased have no knowledge of the living and concern for them (see above 6.1.4.3 of Chapter 4). There is still place for closeness to them in a spiritual sense (cf 1 Cor 5:3) and imitating their lives, especially if they served the risen Christ faithfully, and knowing that such emulation will bring God’s blessing and its absence God’s discipline. Since all Christians, deceased and

living, are joined to Christ and seated with him, it should not be foreign to feel a sense of oneness with Christian relatives in heaven and a measure of comfort from this. McGavran (cited in Hesselgrave 1991:12-121) believes that only about 5% of the culture needs to change after the conversion of any person. This would mean that about 95% of African culture remains if the majority of the traditions about the ancestors are no longer followed. From a Christian perspective, an African Christian being progressively conformed into the image of Christ means becoming a better, more human African in an increasingly purified African culture. So an African's 'Africanness,' a European's 'Europeanness,' a Chinese 'Chineseness,' etc, remains, though without the areas incompatible with Christianity. Thus Christianity when correctly understood makes the African more African, not less. See Chapter 6.

It is also worth stating again that the ancestral cult was previously the norm in Europe (Williams 1992:2), but its disappearance did not remove the cultural-ethnic distinctives. This can especially be seen in African Americans: though their ancestral cult has long been discarded, they still have largely retained their unique religio-cultural African identity. There was also the move in Europe from polytheism (it can be argued that a form of polytheism exists, at least in practice, in ATR) to Christianity: 'their 'world empire' was too big, too powerful for the local gods and slowly the German and Frankish tribes settled for the universal/imperial religion (by that time it was Christianity)' (Manley 2006:181). But again this did not affect cultural identities – Europeans do not reflect any identity crisis.

Needless to say, powerful Western cultural encroachment and the African Renaissance have necessitated black Christians 'wrestling with what it means to be an African Christian' (Mugabe 1995b:11).

Mbiti's (cited in Pollard 1995:28) contention that Christianity is an indigenous African religion is interesting and significant: 'Christianity in Africa is so old that it can rightly be described as indigenous, traditional and African religion.' This approach to Christianity helps an evangelical African Christian to feel fully African. Christianity conceived this way is not a threat to Africanness.

### 5.3 What will be the price to pay to be an African evangelical Christian?

For the evangelical African Christian the price to pay is the loss of many familiar cultural practices: ' "Endings" refers to those elements of a culture that one has to separate from. It is a painful ... loss' (Botman 1995:163). It needs to be appreciated that a non-Christian African finds it difficult to accept that a Christian African is still an African if the ancestral cult is not

practised. Manxaile (2002:278) describes ‘high spiritual activities’ as occurring during the making of covenants and also during rites of passage, and clearly these dimensions of African spirituality are definitive for the meaning of African. In these high activities the common elements are ‘the shedding of blood, the brewing of traditional beer, the assembling of the clan and the invoking of the ancestors’ (:279). Any activity lacking in some of these items but ‘reportedly subject to interventions by the ancestors ... are [also] ... imbued with moments of intense spirituality’ (279). Clearly in Africa the ancestral cult is central to the definition of African. This leads to evangelical African Christians often being ridiculed, despised and even rejected because they cannot subscribe to all aspects of the cult, another cost to bear. Evangelical Africans, nevertheless, (should) find their Christian experience rewarding, meaningful, satisfying and liberating, with no major identity confusion/crisis. But it needs to be emphasized again that no matter what the price, the *Gospel* does not negate any culture and does not require deculturalization except where the Gospel is contradicted. However, African Christians need to be reminded that there is always a cost to pay for following Christ, and frequently this is focused in the home and extended family (Mt 10:34-36).

It is worth noting that in both Israel and the New Testament church there was no place for idolatry and polytheism and ungodliness which were at the heart of non-Christian religions during these periods. The challenge is no different to Christians living in any other cultural—ethnic-religious context. Every Christian has had to face the removal of syncretism. This is not peculiar to the African Church. Because of Satan’s power in the world, especially in influencing culture away from serving God, persecution from unbelievers and even unbelieving family members is to be expected (Mk 13:9-11; 12:13). Bosch (1991:455) refers to the ‘pilgrim principle’, ‘which warns us that the gospel will put us out of step with society.’ He then quotes Walls: ‘for that society never existed, in East or West, ancient time or modern, which could absorb the word of Christ painlessly into its system’ (:455).

#### 5.4 How to defend the claim that evangelicalism is the answer to Africa’s problems

Christian Africans who are convinced of the Gospel and the contents of this Chapter are secure, happy Africans and Christians – there is no identity blurring. They appreciate, or should, that their Africanness has in fact been lifted to a higher stratum: ‘humanity itself is incomplete until in Christ’ (Williams 2008:‘5’). African evangelicals sure of and comfortable in their Africanness will be able to defend their claims to be true Africans.

It has been concluded that the ancestral cult has not helped (i) Africa handle the problems resulting from contact with the modern world, and (ii) nor achieve greater development for which Africa cries out. First world countries and their economies prove that loss of this belief



system contribute to development (admittedly not all positive, e.g. materialism is not development), and African countries are testimony to the fact that the ancestral cult does not bring progress. It has been demonstrated that Christianity is able to heal a destroyed primary identity and remove those aspects of ATR that are preventing development in Africa. Once evangelicalism demonstrates this convincingly in Africa it will undermine the criticism that Christianity is anti-African.

Hodgkin (cited in Chipkin 2007:23) shows that African towns can be seen from two standpoints: ‘... they lead to a degradation of African civilisation and ethic; ... [or] they contain the germs of a new, more interesting and diversified civilisation, with possibilities of greater liberty.’ It has been argued above that towns and cities are not entirely responsible for the ‘degradation of African civilization and ethic.’ Rather they have tested African traditional culture (especially worldview), especially ATR’s ethical power outside closed African communities, and found it wanting. Christianity preserves, or should do so, Africa’s culture wherever African Christians might venture, and provides the power for ethical living. Christianity is realistic, though, and knows that utopia where all cultures thrive, perfect ethics control all living, and full liberty is enjoyed, will only be experienced in the new world. So they ‘will not be obtained in the way of evolution but along that of the catastrophic parousia of Christ Himself’ (Schilder 1932:7). Nevertheless, it is the forthcoming realities of the eschatological kingdom that the church strives for in its personal holiness and campaign for kingdom ethics in the world. Christianity’s answer to Africa’s ethical dilemma and need for identity healing make Christianity defensible and desirable in Africa’s modern situation.

Pure Christianity stresses love for one’s creator and one’s fellow humans. It needs to be restated that this is the ideal formula for a healthy and productive society. The former (love for God) ensures the motivation and dynamic for the latter (love for one’s neighbor). This is because love of God breeds accountability and respect for the human race, God’s highest creation, counters destructive human pride, and sets God’s righteous standards as the norm.

Is Africa ready to critique ATR and be willing to change it where necessary? Is Africa and the evangelical churches ready to study Christianity afresh and how it can bring about the solutions needed for Africa’s plethora of problems and challenges? It is hoped that the dissertation will play a small part in stimulating this urgently required action.

## 5.5 Where to now?

Chapter 5 has demonstrated that unless the relationship between culture and Christianity is properly taught, the members and their churches will never reach their full spiritual and other development potential. In Africa’s time of greatest need, powerful evangelical churches

rooted in African culture and the Gospel have never been more needed. The Chapter has highlightted another area of discipleship in the African evangelical churches that is vitally relevant and where greater clarity and attention are required.

Now the different discipleship needs exposed in the preceding Chapters need to be crystalized and finally integrated into a pastoral model for discipleship of African converts in African evangelical churches. Before the latter final step is taken the writer will also bring his own insights in theological education in Africa and reflections on the continent's needs to bear on the matter. He believes they are relevant to discipleship in African evangelical churches and merit inclusion.

## **An evangelical discipleship model for Africa**

Africa today has a mammoth struggle with the legacy of the missionary, colonial and apartheid eras: racism, land loss, Western cultural imperialism, dehumanization (a ‘people without claims, even without identity’ – Davidson 2001:338), lack of preparation for independence, poverty, joblessness, underdevelopment, dependency and marginalization. This legacy has left painful memories. Despite this turbulent journey the evangelical churches have survived and multiplied dramatically on the African continent. But, Christians in Africa have generally failed to significantly change the legacy for the better as should have been the case. This points directly to inadequate, ineffective discipleship or no discipleship at all. This discipleship deficit in the evangelical movement in Africa stemmed largely from a lack of finances and the massive, rapid growth of the evangelical movement resulting in a major backlog in leadership training. Clearly there is an urgent need for the faster training of leaders and special, immediate attention to discipleship of converts. Chapters 2 and 3 showed the challenging context in which the Church in Africa finds itself: African traditional religion, African Renaissance, and the influence of modernism, postmodernism, and religious pluralism. Evangelical churches, therefore, need a model of discipleship that gives attention to the African context and Western influence. Chapters 3 and 4 revealed why Africans were open to the Gospel, namely that African worldview/culture has much in common with the biblical worldview/culture, especially of the Old Testament. These similarities if not handled from a New Testament perspective make syncretism seem innocent. The similarities together with the differences between ATR and Christianity and the power of the entrenched traditional religion present evangelical African churches with discipleship challenges. Chapter 2 revealed that the increasing influence of Western culture has not significantly weakened the place and hold of ATR. It was noted in Chapter 5 that the missionaries unintentionally encouraged syncretism because they did not root the Gospel in the African soil. Instead they tried to produce European Christians. Chapter 5 also showed the importance of culture for a healthy self-image and identity; it also demonstrated that a battered identity stifles spiritual growth and personal, social and economic development. Discipleship must take cognizance of this and facilitate the healing of the African identity and the painful memories of oppression, suppression and humiliation. The current poverty, unemployment, lack of adequately skilled workers, corrupt governments, despotic presidents, corruption in society, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the growing culture of rights, entitlement and demands in South Africa, are all

challenges to the Church in Africa. The African continent desperately needs a Church that lives and works for the righteous standards of God's kingdom in the countries of Africa, and this includes in her governments as 'The governing authorities have a duty to God, consciously or unconsciously, to promote good ... and resist or eliminate evil ... [they are God's servant] to assist in promoting the very righteousness of God' (Nopece 2004:45). Nopece (:45) therefore states that 'the church should remain the conscience of the government.' The Church needs 'to put before the eyes of the [Christian] people a vision of society as ordained by God' (Ndungane 2004:26). Clearly the need for righteousness and justice in African countries should have a bearing on the task of the discipleship of African converts.

The problem addressed in the dissertation is poor discipleship of converts in evangelical churches in Africa. This problem was firstly deduced from the general superficiality, syncretism and limited influence on Africa of the evangelical churches. Secondly it was observed in the writer's own experience of numerous black churches and students. Chapters 2 to 5 revealed a number of areas that are relevant to discipleship in evangelical churches in Africa. It is the writer's opinion from his research that these areas have generally been neglected or thought irrelevant to discipleship; and that they need to be incorporated into a discipleship model if evangelical churches in Africa are going to reach maturity and significantly impact society. This presents a pressing challenge to the training of leaders/pastors in evangelical theological colleges, seminaries and Christian universities with theological faculties.

This Chapter further elaborates and brings together the lines of research in the previous Chapters and concludes with a proposed comprehensive, applicable model of discipleship for the evangelical churches in Africa. Many aspects of the model will not be new. Hopefully the model will renew a greater commitment to discipleship in African evangelical community, and provide a clearer and more detailed road map for this important task. Africa has reached a fork in the road: one way leads to further political, economic, social and moral conflict and decay; the other is the high road to greater unity, cooperation, vision, morality and development. The writer believes that the Gospel widely, accurately, contextually, sensitively and compassionately preached, taught and applied, is essential if the second road is to be taken.

## **1. Worldview, culture, identity and African Traditional Religion**

It has been demonstrated in this dissertation that worldview, culture and self-identity are intricately linked: worldview leads to culture and culture to identity; and one's cultural identity is one's primary identity. Further, it has been shown that Christian identity does not cancel one's cultural identity, but is the most important identity, an overarching new supra-identity. It was also argued that the Gospel is to be communicated to all ethnic/cultural groups in the world within their cultures. Nürnberger (2007:104) rightly concludes that if the Gospel does not 'become incarnate in any culture it reaches' it 'will fail to transform it from within,' which will make syncretism inevitable. To neglect this matter is to risk failing to effectively evangelize and disciple converts in Christian doctrine and practice. During Bishop Colenso's time in Natal Christian mission 'was understood ... in terms of individual faith, conversion and baptism, which must separate the Zulu converts from their community, their culture and their ancestors' (Draper 2003:xxi). This approach of segregating churches from the surrounding culture and effectively existing as foreign bodies reflected a wrong interpretation of culture *per se*. Clearly the evangelical church in Africa must not evangelize or disciple converts in terms of Western culture or some supposed new universal 'Christian' culture.

The three 'C's' of colonialism were Christianity, commerce and civilization (Bosch 1991:305). Though it would be unfair to claim that all missionaries to Africa failed to study and understand the relationship of Christ to culture and culture to identity, most did not succeed in making the connections (Gehman 1987:8-22). Bosch (1991:310) notes that 'throughout the history of mission, there has always been a persistent minority which, admittedly within limits, withstood the political imposition of the West on the rest of the world.' However, even where missionaries 'became advocates for colonial expansion [including spread of their Western culture], they genuinely believed that their own country's rule would be more benificent than the alternative' (Bosch 1991:305). The missionaries tended to deify Western culture, identify it with Christianity, and believe that African culture was uncivilized, if not depraved, and thus rejected most of or all African culture and sought its replacement with Western civilization (Mtuzi 2003: vii,1,3,5,12,17, 20,39,52,61,63,64,68) which led to identity damage. It has been argued that it is a very serious matter to cause identity confusion and crush self-esteem as this limits confidence, initiative, aggressive planning, growth and productivity – in short it prevents the blossoming of the human being. Clearly all the mistakes resulting from misunderstanding the Christ-culture-identity relationship presented mission and church-planting in Africa with huge obstacles and setbacks. 'Most traditional Africans refused conversion to the Christian faith because they sensed the deliberate brainwashing and indoctrination that was taking place in the churches of

the missionaries' (du Toit and Ngada 1999:2) – the heart of this process was deculturation. This problem would have been lessened if the Gospel had been communicated and experienced in terms of the local culture. Hovil (2005:121) found from his study of discipleship and leadership-training in the Anglican Church of Uganda that neglecting or refusing to engage with the local culture 'contributes to failures and shortcomings in mission and ministry', and that therefore it 'is vital for authentic praxis.' Christianity understandably has been accused of being a white man's religion (Idowu cited in Kato 1975:107-108), which has also hampered mission. The missionaries failed to appreciate that '[African] Culture [parts compatible with Christianity] as such can [and should] be baptized by Christianity' (Kato 1975:175, 178) and provide 'Christian enrichment' (Kato 1975:178). Christian leaders in Africa today, whether white or black, need to be fully aware of the relationship between Christ and culture and self-identity and integrate it into their discipleship programme.

It seems that Western evangelical Christian leaders in Africa have focused almost exclusively on the differences and largely ignored the similarities between Christianity and ATR. This has led many Africans to the incorrect assumption that Christianity rejects everything African. As noted above, since every African bears the image of God in his being, mind and personality, African culture has some good and desirable features. No African should therefore have to confront the utterly humiliating and destructive accusation that all African culture is trash (also Unander 2000:100). This brutal act of judgment so damaging to self-worth is surely condemned by James: 'With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be' (3:9). The thrust of the whole passage (vv 1-12) is that to speak evil of a person created in God's image is to speak evil of God. Surely the wholesale ruthless and sustained degradation of Africans has been a slap in God's face, a terrible insult to him, a defaming of his name and a detracting from his glory? The implication of the argument in the James' passage 'is that if we are speaking insults or curses, that is our nature. Our praises of God are a cover-up, a type of hypocrisy' (Davids 1994:1363). These are sobering words. It seems that in the light of this biblical passage much heart-searching and repentance are needed on the part of most Western missionaries and white Christians in Africa.

It was noted in Chapter 4 that Christianity is based on a very specific, unique and exclusive worldview, which has to be owned by converts. This means that the greater the differences between the convert's previous worldview and Christianity's worldview the greater the worldview and cultural changes required of the new convert. But it was argued in Chapter 5

that these changes are not so great as to de-Africanize the African converts and thus cause them to reject their African heritage as Kato (1975:177) notes: 'A rejection of non-Christian beliefs is sometimes [erroneously] taken to mean a rejection of one's own heritage.'

It has been noted that human culture is 'predominantly conservative' and when 'significant cultural change [e.g. worldview] takes place it is experienced as revolutionary' (du Toit 2002:87). The Christian leader in Africa needs to understand that it is therefore difficult to change aspects of a person's culture, especially the worldview, and that since worldview shapes culture, changes in culture called for by the Gospel will not be permanent unless the African worldview is changed where necessary. This means that if new converts do not fully embrace Christianity's worldview there will be little chance for growth in Christian belief and behaviour that avoid syncretism. Thus if discipleship fails to accurately compare the two worldviews, show where ATR has to be changed to make it compatible with Christianity, and show the role of worldview in the creation of culture, converts will partially, usually secretly, or totally return to ATR and its ministrations.

A comment here concerning Christ's incarnation is apposite and thought-provoking: 'Jesus was prepared to give up his 'culture' when he became incarnate. He adopted something very foreign to his heavenly origin, and did not 'grasp' at it [his heavenly glory] (Phil 2:6)' (Williams 2008:6'). When any Christian throughout the world is asked to give up only *some* of his/her culture, this act is made easier in the light of Christ's giving up (emptying himself of) *all* his heavenly 'culture'. Further, Christ's emptying was necessary for Christians to receive 'every spiritual blessing' (Eph 1:3). Similarly, the Christians' putting aside some elements of their cultures opens up a pathway of blessing for them and those to whom they relate in the church and the world. The Apostle Paul's testimony is also pertinent here: in Philippians 3:7ff he describes many precious cultural features he gave up because they stood in the way of greater blessings.

Evangelical Africans should be persuaded that from a biblical perspective it must be possible to produce faithful converts in Africa who stay African (they cannot be otherwise). The challenge, therefore, for Western missionaries, pastors and theological educators in Africa is to carefully study ATR and African customs, and then endeavour to disciple the African convert so that his/her African identity is not undermined and syncretism is avoided. It is understandable that African traditional purists will argue that such a person is not a true African. Evangelical Africans must therefore be helped to not be unsettled by those Africans who accuse them of denying their Africanness. Evangelical Africans have simply defined

Africanness both in a narrower and broader way. If evangelicals perceive Christianity as the fulfilment and purification of ATR, they should view Christianity as leading to a purer and richer form of Africanness. The following analogy is helpful in understanding this concept. One can think of a car without any shine and in need of panel-beating. Once the car is fixed and the shine restored it is still the same car make but an improved version. Once this understanding of Christian transformation is reached, evangelical Africans can respectfully reject the accusation that their Christianity has abandoned their right to be called African; rather, they have more right than the non-Christian African to be called African. So the African secular debate around the definition of an African should not be allowed to confuse Christian Africans as to their African identity. Above it was noted that cultural borrowing leads to cultural enrichment and better communication and functioning in 'the global cosmopolitan village'; it further develops one's humanity and produces a more complete and mature person. Mbiti's radical stand on this matter can therefore be rejected as untrue: Christianity expands by 'pushing traditional religions [which includes African culture] on the defensive, expecting them [Africans] to keep silence, listen to their sermons, copy their examples, yield, give up, disappear and be forgotten.'

Ministry to African converts who have been heavily influenced by modernism, postmodernism or radical pluralism needs to take this background into account. Their discipleship should therefore entail knowledge about them and their underlying worldviews so that their discipleship is more relevant and effective.

It was noted in Chapter 5 that the New Testament church became multi-racial and multi-cultural, though not without major resistance and hurtful episodes. But by the time the last New Testament document/letter was written, there could be no doubt that different cultures were not to be a barrier to acceptance of each other and unity in the Christian church. Therefore it is wrong to 'believe that in Christ all our differences should disappear' as many Christians, especially in America, believe (Hopler and Hopler 1993:64). Multi-ethnic churches should learn important lessons from the Book of Acts on how to promote unity within diversity. In the multi-racial and multi-cultural church in Antioch unity was promoted by having a multi-racial and multi-cultural leadership: 'Each leader probably represented an ethnic contingent. Simeon was black. Lucius was Greek. Manaen was Jewish' (Hopler and Hopler 1993:87). Further, the common name of 'Christian' was coined to denote that believers came from different ethnic-cultural groups, and that irrespective of their culture, had a common identity rooted in Christ. 'The name [Christian] probably came from outsiders, but it highlights the believers' focus on Jesus Christ' (Hopler and Hopler 1993:86). Thus unity as



noted in Chapter 4 was through the centrality of Christ in the early believers. Christ is the glue that holds disparate ethnic groups together in the one church. 'Culture is not the center of the Bible; Christ is. But when the Bible mentions culture, it is important. Likewise we must take culture and cultural differences seriously – for the sake of the life of the church' (Hopler and Hopler 1993:91). Discipleship must, therefore, instill the principle of unity in diversity and how to work this out in practice. This is important even in Africa with its many tribes. The writer witnessed this need when he noted that the Xhosa students at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape were amazed to discover that Africans from other African countries who came to study at the Institute were not exactly the same culturally as them. They were sceptical and suspicious of them. As a result the Xhosa students had to be taught that these foreign black students did not have to become like them in every area and detail in order to have unity with them or to be genuine Africans. This scenario confirmed the tenuous nature of the term 'African' and that it is somewhat naive to define 'African' too broadly.

Perhaps the most significant part in Chapter 5 was the importance of a united, single, uncompromised identity. Such an identity is necessary for maximum functionality in society, the Church, one's country and the world. It is truly sad that the missionaries played a major part in identity breakdown in Africa, not to mention apartheid. It will never be fully computed in this life the price Africa and the African Church have had to pay for breaking down the self-esteem and self-worth of Africans (see below about South Korea's unbelievable development partly through the development of a healthy Korean identity). The restoration of a strong and confident personal identity is possibly the most important mission for the Church in Africa. Clearly discipleship must include this very important matter.

## **2. The African Renaissance**

The wars of independence in Africa during the second half of the twentieth century and the African Renaissance were and are respectively partly a response to the negative perception of Africa by the West and an effort to reassert the Africans' human dignity which the foreign powers had denied them (Sithole cited in Chipkin 2007:26). In one of the most infamous USA trials in 1857, Justice Taney notoriously characterized black people as 'a subordinate and inferior class of beings who ... whether emancipated or not ... had no rights which the white man was bound to respect' (Hunt nd:5). Hunt (nd:6) rightly states that 'this meant that blacks had ***no right to be respected*** by whites' and that 'blacks were not at all human but rather just *'things'*'; and *'things'* that were 'so far below [whites] in the scale of created beings', that they should be regarded as 'ordinary article[s] of merchandise', and therefore 'that blacks had no

legal rights ... and no human rights to be respected'. It was a denial of black humanity. 'Apartheid and colonialism have taught us [blacks] we are less than human and consciously or unconsciously we have believed it' (Mugabe 1995a:7). The Taney court case left a bitter legacy which the African Renaissance is trying to erase.

No doubt the African Renaissance is also a response to '50 years of ruined modernism' (Chipkin 2007:34). But the African Renaissance 'should not be a process of recapturing what Africans were before the coming of the Europeans, but rather a display of an ingenuity that maintains the African character but seeks to improve and better the current level of world civilisation' (Nkesiga 2005:81; also Keita cited in Higgs and Smith 2002:111). Nkesiga is clearly implying that only the aspects in ATR that have held Africa back should be allowed to go in the interest of upgrading African and world civilization. Christianity will help achieve all the above and realize Nkesiga's vision as it provides the best basis for a healthy self-image, a good work-ethic, moral ethics and the needed power to live thereby, freedom, and respect for all cultures.

The African Renaissance championed by Thabo Mbeki is a highly significant development in Africa. Pollard (1995:25) notes this in the following comment: 'To overcome the damage wrought to the black psyche by three centuries of white supremacist rule required a different approach, a cultural one.' This movement did not start with Mbeki. Its forerunners were the Pan-African Movement, the Harlem Renaissance and the African struggle for political freedom (cf Nkesiga 2005:64-70). It is comprised of two prongs: 'And from the very outset, the project of *rebuilding the African past* was linked to *imagining a new African future*' (Parker and Rathbone 1997:115, emphasis added). So apart from the challenge it embraces to develop (liberate) Africa politically, economically, educationally and socially, it is focused on a renaissance of African traditions – of them being studied, respected, defended, and proudly owned before the nations of the world. 'The challenge in post-colonial Africa ... is to recover and draw on this wealth [of cultures]' (Hovil 2005:124). Visualizing a new future means facing the challenge of changing certain features of ATR, of embracing limited but significant aspects of modernity, and of seeking comprehensive development. '... humankind *has no choice*: it has to move beyond both traditionalism and modernity' (Nürnberger 2007:237).

It was noted above that one main focus of the African Renaissance is to liberate the African from a low self-image and replace it with a healthy, vibrant African identity. The Black Consciousness movement spear-headed by Steve Biko helped towards healing the African identity. 'For the first time many black women could fall in love with their dark complexions, kinky hair, bulging hips, and particular dress style. They found new pride in themselves as

they were. They were no longer ‘non-whites’ but blacks with an authentic self, appreciated on their own terms’ (Pityana cited in Pollard 1995:26).

The South Korean success story is relevant here. The evangelical churches in Korea played a part in strengthening the Korean identity, inculturating the Gospel, which in turn had an impact on the Church’s growth and the country’s human and economic development: in the churches the ‘shift was away from ecclesiology and concern with the institutional church, to nationalism and concern with the recovery of the national identity. It is this paradigm shift which enabled Christianity to become truly Korean’ (Kraft 2002:299). It is also interesting to note that in South Korea there was no cultural imperialism by the missionaries that undermined the worth and importance of the Korean culture and thus of the people (:308). So in the Korean story we observe the building of a strong Korean (cultural-ethnic-national) identity and a church fully indigenized, resulting in remarkable spiritual and economic growth. It seems this story confirms the dissertation’s unfolding of a link between cultural identity, Christianity rooted in the culture, a strong and widespread evangelical movement, and a successful country. This means a discipleship model for the large Evangelical Church in Africa that honours cultures and incorporates the elements of Chapter 5 will have major spin-offs for spiritual growth and development of industry, research, technology and other areas of life. Clearly the right discipleship model for Africa will constitute a part of the African Renaissance.

The very term African Renaissance creates the impression that Africa, at least black Africa, essentially comprises one race, one people, one culture. If this is encouraging Africa to stand together against the West’s cultural bombardment, stimulate pride in being an African, restore and enhance self-dignity and identity, and thereby achieve greater development, it can hardly be criticized. However, the concept of the African Renaissance blurs and even covers the very real differences, jealousies and animosities between various African ethnic groups/tribes. Nevertheless, it has been shown that it is legitimate to talk about African Traditional Religion (singular), which the Renaissance is seeking to restore and which provides a legitimate basis for African identity as argued in Chapter 5. It has been shown that this presents African evangelicals with an identity crisis as significant traditional beliefs, especially concerning the ancestors, are not compatible with Christianity, which does not permit syncretism. At least non-Christian Africans challenge the black evangelical’s claim to be African. It was argued in Chapter 5 that the solution to this dilemma is a modification of the definition of Africanness which defines, according to Christianity, a truer and better African. To strengthen the claim that black evangelicals are African, they should focus much more on the cultural aspects that

would remain after conversion, eg. customs related to choice and preparation of food, table practices at meal times, dress, extended family, singing style, boisterous speaking, strong emphasis on socializing, respect for their deceased relatives, and Ubuntu – all those features that do not contradict the Gospel (see above). Further, it needs to be shown how many African qualities play a huge part in Christian living and church life, e.g. social harmony, prominence of the group or community, warm social relationships, and respect for parents/elders/leaders. Clearly a powerful case can be made for the evangelical African being a true African. So African evangelicals should be part of the African Renaissance, with provisos, which will help defuse the argument that they have denied their Africanness, rightly an odious matter to other Africans.

The African Renaissance is a reminder of the biblical recognition of culture. If a Christian African has to deny his Africanness, it is not only dehumanizing for him/her, but also, as noted above, an affront to the God of the Bible who has placed his image in every African, which has helped make African culture possible. Dwane (cited in Mtuze 2003:88) shows how important it is for Africans to pursue a healthy self-identity through their culture: ‘But we are beginning to realize that we are in captivity, and that we need to be liberated in order that we may be ourselves, the people whom God has made us, and wants us to be. We are learning in this process of re-orientating and re-educating ourselves how to become African, and what it is that makes us African.’ How tragic that the church played a key role in trying to colonize the cultures of Africa with its destructive impact on African identity. Mtuze (2003:97) rightfully states that ‘the Church in Africa has an enormous missionary task on its shoulders to mission the institutional Church and help it rid itself of all the vestiges of Eurocentrism ...’ It is sad that it took a secular government and political movement led by Thabo Mbeki to aggressively counter the undermining of ATR promoted by most of the missionaries, colonialists, and Christian whites in Africa. The irony is that the culture of the so-called Christian West is largely no better – it has spawned a flood of individualism, moral filth and godless materialism, which are steadily infecting the rest of the world. Thabo Mbeki (2006) sounded this sad theme of a soulless, callous, selfish materialism leading to a dwarfed humanity invading South Africa in his Nelson Mandela Memorial Lecture. Interestingly in this lecture he quoted extensively from the Bible. Clearly much in Western culture is no improvement on African culture.

Makhulu (1999:15) provides a necessary caution to the African Renaissance project: ‘The South African Renaissance should avoid idolizing everything that is traditionally African ...’ This caution together with the unavoidable evolution of culture in the modern world should

make it easier for Christian Africans to be comfortable with a narrower (slightly less African) and broader (Christian) definition of Africanness if it means a more human face and more effective living. The evangelical rightly avoids placing all hope in the African Renaissance to solve all Africa's problems. Mbeti (1969:227) states that Christianity and African Christians with a distinct African identity are the foundation for solutions to Africa's problems: 'Christianity which is also 'indigenous', 'traditional' and 'African'... holds the greatest and the only potentialities of meeting the dilemmas and challenges of modern Africa, and reaching the full integration and manhood [sic] of individuals and communities.' Evangelicals therefore believe that Africa needs Spiritual Reformation (reformation through the Gospel) which ensures a Moral Reformation (the goal of Christianity) as well as an African Renaissance.

The African Renaissance and a spiritual reformation are both needed if Africa is to be transformed into a safe, corruption-free, well ruled, independent and prosperous continent (see below). Christian discipleship in Africa needs to promote the African Renaissance (without syncretism) and especially a Reformation through the power of the Gospel that will complement the African Renaissance and have ramifications throughout society.

The following quotation is a fitting paragraph with which to end this section: 'To summarise, the goal of Afrocentrism is not to uncritically replace "white" history with "black" history or "European" Christianity with "African" Christianity, but rather to promote a more authentic view of the world as the product of all human cultures, broadly defined and valued in their many hues, not least of which is black. In so doing, Afrocentrism prophetically challenges Eurocentric claims to superiority ....' (Pollard 1995:26).

### **3. Teaching the doctrines of Christianity**

Chapter 4 demonstrated that thorough discipleship of new converts in the faith in Africa is a tremendous challenge but vital if maturity is to be reached and syncretism prevented. It was noted in Chapter 5 that worldview shapes and drives culture and that permanent changes in culture will only be achieved if the necessary worldview changes are effectively made. This also means that until the African convert fully embraces the Christian worldview there will be confusion over areas of Christian truth which will lead to syncretism, especially in times of crisis, and thus stifling or preventing of Christian growth. Further, worldview is resistant to any alteration because it is so deep-seated and taken for granted. Perhaps, therefore, the first phase of discipleship in the Gospel should be teaching the Christian worldview and contrasting it with ATR in order to establish why the African's worldview needs adjustments.

This in turn will make it easier to understand why certain cultural practices need to go. Adeney (2007:37) reminds one that the Gospel is up to the challenge: since the church began it has shown that it can ‘change cultures, shift values, reorganize structures, and modify traditional practices.’ In Galatians 1:14 Paul refers to his previous zeal for his fathers’ traditions, which was overcome after conversion. This indicates that one’s culture, where necessary, can be permanently changed without damage to personal identity.

It is important at this point to ponder further how the new birth relates here. Christianity achieves worldview alteration – the part of culture most resistant to change – primarily through the rebirth. This radical inner transformation prepares the convert for acceptance of the biblical worldview – an enculturation in Christianity as the baby Christian grows up in Christ and the church. Clearly if the new birth has not taken place the ATR worldview will stay firmly in place and discipleship will yield no real and permanent results. The converts and especially those who disciple them in the evangelical churches in Africa therefore need to be thoroughly taught about the new birth – its source, nature, timing, purpose and results. This need is made more urgent as African churches are being exposed to Western manipulative approaches in evangelism: superficial Gospel presentation, fervent, repetitive altar-calls (forceful pressure on the will), and play on emotions and the hearers’ needs and wants, reducing conversion to a mere emotional or pragmatic decision. Through these persuasive techniques African people respond, sometimes in their thousands, to the appeals, especially as the evangelists are perceived as authority figures and therefore to be submitted to. The responders after repeating the sinner’s prayer and in some cases after signing a card are pronounced Christians when in fact many of them have not experienced the miraculous rebirth and conviction of sin and true conversion. This approach is rife in most evangelical churches and largely explains why syncretism is rife in evangelical churches in Africa. Hesselgrave (2006:90) therefore rightly notes that syncretism ‘sometimes results from a failure to come to grips with the true nature of Christian conversion and the spiritual decision-making process.’ His (1980:2001) advice to evangelists is that they are ‘to employ the most appropriate methods of evangelism.’ Popular methods of mass evangelism therefore need to be corrected to ensure genuine converts alone are brought into a discipleship programme. Other religions and cults grow their membership without any new birth. This being the case it should not be a surprise if people join the church without the new birth of the Holy Spirit, especially if promised benefits are tantalizingly paraded before them. Another problem with the mass evangelism approach is that converts are not usually followed up or adequately disciplined: after conversion it is assumed ‘that growth in knowledge will automatically be

accompanied by growth in intimacy with Christ and closeness to other Christians' (Kraft 2002::149), or that all that is needed is some 'glib how-to formulas for instant spiritual maturity' (Carson 1984:62).

Two examples from the lives of graduates of the Bible Institute Eastern Cape will illustrate that discipleship of converts cannot usually be accomplished in a short period of time. This means Christian teaching and its application should be taken very seriously and exercised with great patience and endurance. Bongani, not his real name, recently deceased, came with his family to live at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape during his training. It appeared by the end of the first semester in his last year that his worldview was a consistently biblical one. Then in class one day the writer got into a discussion of illness and the different Christian approaches to persistent sickness. Bongani confidently stated he would first pray to God, then consult a medical doctor if necessary, but if both failed he would consult a traditional healer-diviner in case the illness was caused by evil spirits or displeased ancestors. In spite of two-and-half years of theological training, Bongani had not appreciated that the last option cannot be harmonized with orthodox Christianity. His reason was that Christianity as he had experienced it did not have answers to illnesses caused by ancestors or malevolent spirits. He claimed that once he left the Institute's student residence and returned to his township he would be confronted again by the spirit world and would have to use traditional methods because of their believed and frequent effectiveness and because his theological training had not prepared him for this challenge. Bongani was also determined to retain his identity as an African, and correctly so, for which he thought acceptance of all his African culture was required, and hence the acceptance of the cult of the ancestors and the profession of the traditional doctors (sangomas). The encouraging feature of his Christianity was that the central focus of his Christian life was Christ.

It was at this stage that the writer realized that the Institute knew little or nothing about the connection between culture and a healthy personal identity, almost nothing about ATR, and that the devoting of a small part of a semester course to spiritual warfare, and then not in a traditional context, was totally inadequate. The training of Bongani was clearly deficient in that it did not deal adequately with the two worldviews and failed to demonstrate how to apply the Gospel in all areas of the African traditional environment. Years later Bongani returned to the Institute and claimed he had finally fully grasped the biblical worldview and rejected all those aspects of the traditional worldview incompatible with Christianity. His testimony was that it was a better understanding of the Epistle to the Hebrews during his last

semester at the Institute that started him on a journey that finally led to breaking completely with syncretism.

Another student at the Institute, Thembani, not his real name, graduated five years ago. During and after his training he showed an incredible grasp of Christian doctrine and strongly and comprehensively embraced the Christian worldview. He even showed great skill in arguing against Christians compromising with ATR where it conflicted with Christianity. After what appeared to be many abortive efforts to get on his feet financially and after a few car accidents, he found the family pressure to seek the cause and solution from a traditional practitioner somewhat appealing. He resisted this pressure for a year or more knowing this was not an option for him. But eventually he raised with the writer the traditional explanation of events in his life over the previous two years which seemed so plausible. He was clearly battling not to accept this view, but it was becoming more and more attractive as an explanation of his long run with so-called bad luck. The writer went carefully through the Christian interpretation of his situation. Thembani realized after discussion with the writer that he had to take much of the blame for the difficulties, problems and lack of progress in his career, and failure to become financially independent. After a sizable loan things improved marginally, especially through perseverance, and growing wisdom and expertise in his field. But now it is clear his business has failed. The ATR explanation will again be very tempting. Craffert (1999b:50) notes this: 'In cultures where everything significant is caused by a personal power or agent and where agents (human or otherwise) are in control of people's destiny, inducement by means of sacrifice makes perfect sense' (Craffert 1999b:50). The writer has finally concluded that Thembani is not sufficiently gifted to run his own business. He should be employed. Bongani and Thembani's stories illustrate the importance of discipleship of Christian Africans in the Christian faith (and of course Christians outside Africa) if they are to hold firmly and confidently to the evangelical position and resist resorting to practices in ATR again that cannot be harmonized with the Gospel. This kind of discipleship should also demonstrate and teach the biblical approaches to illness, healing, trials, demons, the ancestors and animal and other sacrifices (see Chapter 4) in a sensitive, wise and patient manner.

It is important to be aware of the 'pragmatic view of religion [in Africa]', the principal features of which are 'experiencing rather than formulating and expressing religion in set terms, and a deep understanding of it as consisting in practical relationships in the community' (Setiloane 2000:44-45). This is brought out in the fact that in Africa 'religion



deals with present problems' (Williams 1993:1). In other words, the natural predilection of the African for the pragmatic, concrete, and social interaction has meant a lack of interest in doctrinal teaching. However, the New Testament repeatedly stresses that a proper understanding of Christian doctrine is necessary if the practical side of Christianity is to be fully realized. Christian discipleship therefore should not only include teaching of Christian beliefs and practical Christian living, but in the right order. If both elements and their relationship to each other are not soundly taught in discipleship, syncretism will be a problem. The African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs) have proliferated across Africa. Most of the leaders of these churches have never been 'exposed to any form of Western theological training' (du Toit and Ngada 1999:1). The writer taught at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape for the last sixteen and a half years. His experience was mostly with AIC pastors and AIC trainee pastors. He found they come to the Institute with limited knowledge of doctrine, systematic and biblical theology, hermeneutics, exegesis, how to apply Scripture, and the relation between the two Testaments. Their testimony is that their pastors and they themselves before arriving at the Institute for training possessed no theological tools, specifically books, and preached biblical and personal stories and spiritualized every passage; and their ethical teaching and their living were biblically sub-standard. They also confessed that they never realized there was so much involved in being equipped for the Christian ministry. They came from church backgrounds where the (supernatural) call to ministry and ordination, symbolized in the collar and title, are all that count, and where the role of study is secondary, or optional, or even considered dangerous to a Spirit-filled ministry. They are always amazed to discover how thoroughly ill-equipped they were for their preaching before studying at the Institute and very embarrassed by some of the things they had preached before. Kato (1975:15) refers to this situation in the Church in Africa: 'So a mammoth church has been established without the depth of theology that the church needs.' He (1975:15) sees part of the problem as due to a 'lack [of] sound theological education' in most past and present missionaries. No wonder the church in Africa has been described as miles wide and only an inch deep, or as Nürnberger (2007:40) puts it, 'in most cases the impact [of Christianity] has been partial and incomplete. Some observers believe that for the majority of African Christians it is rather superficial.' Clearly this situation – a bad witness to unbelievers – points to poor instruction of converts in word and example in Christian doctrine and practice. The 'process of discipleship needs to be more than skin-deep. It must penetrate to the very core of our being' (Kretzschmar 1995b:36). The writer has also learnt from his black students that the African Church is marked by schisms, another sign of its immaturity. 'The first foundations of independent churches were

the result of *schismatic*, that is separatist, movements of protest’ – against the colour bar, missionary domination and cultural alienation in the mission-related churches (Baur 1998:489). This phase of fragmentation of the African Church leading to movements of ‘Ethiopian’ churches and ‘African’ churches (:489-490,492) is understandable. Then followed the movement of prophetic-charismatic churches leading up to and after independence which embraced the religious and social African heritage (:492). ‘The split into more and more bodies was the most distinctive mark of the years 1970 to 1995’ (:491). Baur notes possible reasons for ‘the multiple fragmentation or fissions of the Church in Africa: thirst for leadership, possibly because in the colonial period the church afforded the only place for African initiative; ‘impact of the extended family, clan and the subtribal units’; and the absence of educational qualifications in the prophet-healer leaders ‘exerted the greatest attraction on the unsophisticated men and women who have reaped few of the benefits of modernity’ (:494-495). Many of these reasons are valid. However, the unbiblical, worldly spirit of division is a major reason for the atomization of the African Church. Tshelane (2000:154) notes the need for the AICs to not overdo their autonomy and their concern for their own churches. Only sound biblical discipleship – teaching and training – will eradicate the schismatic forces. Tshelane (2000:152) sees the multitude of AIC churches in South Africa from a misunderstanding of the process of registration of churches with the South African government up until 1963 which ‘led to much confusion and strife.’

Since many people in Africa are functionally or totally illiterate, oral teaching is vital for successful discipleship in their case. ‘In theory and practice AIC spirituality regards orality and singing as pre-eminent’ (Tshelane 2000:142). ‘AIC spirituality demands that memory should always be kept alive’ (:144). Slater (cited in Hovil 2005:138) focused his doctoral work in the area of tension created when teaching in oral cultures is based on literacy: ‘... this tension [is] at the heart of understanding ruptures in learning and failure to own knowledge ...’ Clearly oral methods of communicating knowledge need more attention. Using riddles, proverbs, poetry, chants, stories, song and dance for Christian teaching are most helpful. ‘They [Africans] also know that stories convey meaning in life-giving ways that far exceeds a list of principles’ (Hopler and Hopler 1993:55). The Lausanne Occasional Paper No.54, *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* (2005), deals with how to make disciples in an oral culture. It notes that ‘In 2000 years since Christ’s Great Commission, only 10% of all peoples are evangelical followers of Jesus’ (:28). Why? The answer must include the fact that nearly two thirds of the world’s population are oral communicators (:1) and evangelism and

discipleship concentrate on using literature. Another problem with this approach is the need to first reduce the language to writing and teach how to read. These are lengthy processes and delay effective evangelism and discipleship. The paper also quotes from a USA survey that reveals that 58% of the population never read another book after high school, 42% of university graduates never read another book, and adults watch TV for four hours per day, listen to radio for three hours and read magazines for fourteen minutes (:24). It is therefore amazing then that an estimated 90% of the world's Christian workers are presenting the Gospel in highly literate communication styles (:1). The result of this approach is that the majority of oral communicators 'are not really *hearing* it [the gospel]' (:1).

'In general, there is a cluster of features that oral learners have in common in processing information – they most readily process information that is concrete and sequential, and which is presented in a highly relational context' (:10). Story telling embraces these and therefore enables the people to absorb, respond to and remember the message (:4). Stories that are faithful to the biblical text and 'told in a natural, compelling manner in the heart language' (:4) communicate biblical truth most effectively. *Simply The Story* is an organization that helps train literate teachers to train literate and non-literate learners. It has a most helpful paper (2007), *The Jesus Model: Tell the Story, Ask Questions*, that covers how to prepare a story, how to find treasures in the story, and how to frame one's questions. The Lausanne Occasional Paper referred to above understandably argues for appropriate methods of evangelism and discipleship in oral societies and among functional illiterates (oral communicators by choice) in literate societies. This should go hand-in-hand with creating literacy. So for authentic and successful training of converts in the faith an enterprise is necessary that takes 'into account both the traditional and modern' (Hovil 2005:147). '... we envisage a systematic approach to evangelism, discipleship, church planting and leadership development that can involve oral, audio, audio-visual media and print' (*Making Disciples of Oral Learners* 2005). McLlwain of New Tribes Mission has developed a series of Bible stories to relate the biblical message chronologically known as *Firm Foundations* ([Online]). This Bible study series centres on following God's progressive revelation of his character and plan of redemption within the context of history from creation to Christ.

*Making Disciples of Oral Learners* (2005) provides powerful examples of dramatically improved results when oral methods of communication of knowledge are used. 'There was one church with a few baptized members in 1999 when I attended the seminar. But now in 2004, in six years we have 75 churches with 1350 baptized members and 100 more people are ready for baptism' (:1). '... missionaries worked for twenty-five years with the Tiv tribe in

central Nigeria and saw only twenty-five baptized believers as a result. ... Then some young Tiv Christians set the gospel story to musical chants, the indigenous medium of communication. Almost immediately the gospel began to spread like wildfire and soon a quarter million Tivs were worshipping Jesus' (:5).

How is syncretism avoided when working with oral communicators? The Lausanne Paper gives two strategies: practices like prayer, worship, witness, fellowship and ministry must 'fit the local culture under the leadership of the Holy Spirit', and biblical stories must be worldview specific, namely be told so that they 'offer alternative answers to the fundamental worldview questions' (:15). Once again it is shown that understanding of the role of culture is crucial to effectively teaching Christian beliefs.

Smith (1984:25-32) contrasts contextual logic and linear logic, the former being more popular in Africa and the latter more popular in the West. He argues that unless contextual logic is used in teaching in the African Church there will be limited progress. Linear logic emphasizes 'the direct cause and effect relationship' (:26). Linear logic is illustrated for example in a home video evidence of a family shooting: A shot B because after A raises his gun and fires B immediately falls down and starts bleeding. Contextual logic, however, goes much wider and comes at the problem from different angles. In this example, because the why of the shooting in traditional African society is more important, one 'would look at the reason for the happening, the relationships of the people involved, and try to understand the total surroundings or context of the event. What personal pressures [were] ... these two characters experiencing? What [was] ... the weather like, and how good [were] ... their relationships with other people in the group' (:27). He gives another example of a cow eating the crops of a neighbour through the herd boy's neglect. They will know that the boy is responsible. But they will ask: 'Why did this happen? Why did the cow go into this particular garden? Why did it go into any garden at all? What moved the cow to act in such a way?' (:28). 'The differences between linear and contextual logic originate in the differences between what is considered important in culture A versus what is considered important in culture B' (:28). The Westerner looks at the immediate cause of a problem and fixes it. An African approach is 'primarily to restore social and spiritual balance' (:28) and hence the problem is analysed far more broadly. Smith (:29-30) notes that the Bible has examples of both logic. He (:32) also states that 'It would be misleading to consider that any group or person is totally linear or totally contextual in thinking.' Clearly contextual logic, especially with reference to the spirit world, must play a key role in teaching of converts to Christ in Africa.

Cantrell conducted research into two hundred and fifty Baptist churches founded since 1990 in the Baptist Union of Southern Africa. He found that over a third of these churches were being pastored by non-resident pastors, and often only a single weekend per month is spent with the church (2005:273). Less than half the pastors preach expository sermons; only about 20-25% of these churches have become mature; and only approximately half of the churches have a capable pastor who ‘has received or is receiving some kind of adequate training (even if it is non-formal)’ (:274). He also notes that the tent evangelism ‘draws many more “decisions” than real, lasting disciples’ (:274). Cantrell’s findings refer to churches in a denomination committed to orthodox evangelicalism and building strong churches. If this denomination is failing in its discipleship responsibilities, how much more so must this be the case in other evangelical churches and AICs. Clearly the problem can be traced to, firstly, inadequately trained leaders, secondly, a drastic shortage of trained pastors, and, thirdly, the root of these two shortcomings is ‘deficient church planting’ (:272). ‘One of the indictments of colonial [and modern] missions is its consistent failure to establish associations of independent, *thriving*, and reproducing churches, *filled with real leaders, able to think theologically in their own culture*’ (Reed cited in Cantrell 2005:274, emphasis added). O’Brien (cited in Cantrell 2005:275) notes that an integral part of the Apostle Paul’s strategy was to ‘ensure the *nurture of emerging churches*.’ A huge task confronts the evangelical movement in Africa in the area of doctrinal instruction and training in Christian living so that mature congregations are produced that can positively impact African society.

Carson (1984) in his exegesis and application of 2 Corinthians 10-12 notes the Apostle Paul’s concern ‘to consolidate the gains in Corinth before moving on’ (:87). He (:87-88) makes a most pertinent application to discipleship by stating that Paul’s approach testifies

to the importance of full-orbed discipleship, of building churches and not just winning converts. In a sense, Paul is prepared to mortgage his own vision of the future to the needs of the Corinthian church. If God called him to establish a church in Corinth, he cannot abandon that responsibility just because he detects new opportunities and still greater needs elsewhere. Consolidation is the foundation on which to launch new advance.

Carson (:189) goes on to note from 2 Corinthians 13:10 that ‘If the Corinthian church should prove largely false, he [Paul] feels free to destroy the work and remove the rot, in the hope of building something better.’ In other words, Christian leaders should not tolerate churches where unspirituality reigns and leave them happily in that state. African evangelical evangelists and pastors need this insight on Paul’s apostolic church planting ministry to guide

their evangelistic and pastoral ministries. If they do the African Church will not be plagued by superficiality, worldliness and syncretism.

#### **4. Teaching and applying the Gospel contextually**

Before developing this theme, the following quotation needs some comment: In evangelism the evangelist must ‘explain what the Bible teaches about the veneration of ancestral spirits as fully as possible BEFORE a person is invited to receive God’s Son ... This is the morally correct thing to do’ (Brown 2000:20). This approach is in keeping with the New Testament’s up front stress on the cost of following Christ. On the other hand, the New Testament does not seem to explain how detailed this coverage should be. What is clear, though, is that discipleship is vital to enable converts to grow out of practices that are part of the old life (including those traditions incompatible with Christianity) and put on the deeds of the new life expressed in the culture but without syncretism.

It needs further stressing that church leaders in Africa should not ignore the many similarities between African traditional beliefs and practices and those of Christianity. Knowing the similarities well is important as they are means to establishing a non-threatening communicative base and entry into discussion of the differences. ‘The stress should be made upon areas of affirmation [similarities] before any questions or criticisms are raised’ (Gangel and Wilhoit 1993:286). ATR also needs to be carefully studied in order to understand how it gives meaning and security to life in a spirit-populated world where wellbeing lies in maintaining cosmic harmony. Only after this necessary exercise can it be discovered how to effectively teach and apply the Gospel to Africans so that it can be seen how African needs, longings and concerns can be genuinely and more satisfyingly met through the Gospel.

It was demonstrated in Chapter 5 that Christianity can only flourish within the culture of the Christian. The complete opposite of applying the Gospel contextually is to for example to present the Gospel in ‘Western swaddling-clothes’ (Setiloane 2000:49) and apply it as if the context is Europe or North America, i.e. to impose ‘many Western cultural practices like language, dress, food, manners and so forth, as if these were part of the gospel of Jesus Christ’ (Nolan 1995:76; also Snyman 2008:107). This happened as a ‘consequence of European normativity’ and ‘a Western interpretation of Christ’ (Snyman 2008:114). Missionaries ‘were not only grossly ignorant of the culture within which they were supposed to operate but they also consciously refused to be part of that culture’ (Mtuze 2003:108). It was not realized that ‘one of the essential concepts underlying Christianity, [is] that the Christian *meanings* are sacred, not the cultural *forms* used to convey them’ (Kraft 2002:142).

Using Western forms gave the impression that Christianity is foreign and therefore not applicable to Africans. Clearly in discipleship in Africa Christianity should not be presented from a European perspective.

To be socialized in a community where the worldview (and resulting culture) has been endorsed for centuries means it is a deeply entrenched and dominating force in the people's subconscious mind. It was noted in Chapters 2 and 3 that 'many Africans, including the educated ones, continue to live in two worlds: the traditional as well as the modern scientific world' (Tiberondwa cited by Hovil 2005:132). The traditional world is marked by the presence and unpredictable activity of real spiritual forces, which are manipulated by witches, sorcerers and witch-doctors. Sadly because of fear of witchcraft, people accused of this practice have little chance of defending themselves and are viciously attacked as was the case with an elderly couple in Umlazi, Robert Myeni (86 years of age) and his wife Nomathamsanqa Qola (85 years of age). They were stabbed, wrapped in garbage bags and then torched together with their house (The Independent on Saturday 2005). The following information in this paragraph is taken from this newspaper article. Accusations of witchcraft sometimes stem from jealousy as in South Africa's Limpopo Province where some of the most prosperous or successful or well-educated were necklaced for supposedly being guilty of witchcraft. One traditional healer states that he is able to unleash a spirit to suddenly burn down a house, and when investigations are conducted nobody is able to discover how it happened. He performs evil deeds like this because his customers pay him for this service and because he makes a living from invoking the spirits to act as the community request. Black magic and evil spirit spells appear to be a growing problem in the Indian community in Durban as the number of private mini-temples and priests increase. A priest who has a private temple at Phoenix states that he sees more than sixty families every week and that the problem of black magic or witchcraft is common. Phiri (cited in Siemon-Netto 2002) says 'European missionaries used to say there is no witchcraft. But our experience tells us that it is very present.' So for the new convert the new faith must have answers for experiences and dangers that are not mere superstition or illusion and are constantly prevalent or threatening. For the Gospel to be authentic it must meet the 'integrated needs of a particular people in a particular historical context' (Imasogie 1983:19). The missionaries presented Christ as the answer to the questions white people needed answered, 'the solution to the needs that Western man [sic] would feel' (Tayor cited in de Jongh 2005:140). People like Bongani and Them bani (see above) know only too well that traditional African communities experience an active, unpredictable and at times frightening spirit world, which can be put to service for purposes

of revenge or selfishness or depriving another person of something which has made one jealous.

The missionaries and subsequent Western Christian leaders in Africa failed to take ATR seriously and thoroughly study the challenges, especially in the spirit realm, it presents evangelism and discipleship. Christianity was therefore thought by the converts to be helpless in dealing with the fears generated in ATR. As Mbiti (1969:91) notes, ‘spirits are a reality and a reality which must be reckoned with, whether it is clear, blurred or confused reality.’ In ATR there is a ‘mystical power [which] is not fiction’ (:198). The result of the missionaries’ approach ‘was like being told to remove your roof in the middle of a devastating storm!’ (Mtuze 2003:107). ‘Any religion that undermines these fears or feelings or even superstitions cannot go far in influencing the lives of the affected parties’ (:59). The student Bongani (see above) clearly revealed that his training at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape was in doctrine and not also in how Christians are practically to defend themselves against the spirit-world in a traditional African context. Sadly at that stage the Institute had little to offer on how to counter evil spirit possession and aggressive demonic attacks through spells and other traditional ways. The spirit world is so all-encompassing in Africa that the relevance of Christianity in this realm requires not only a course or two at a Bible college or seminary, but also that the other courses in the curriculum be related to the spirit realm. If Christianity in Africa had been fully contextualized from the beginning the church today would be stronger and with far less syncretism. Western missionaries and leaders should not be surprised that their inadequate approach to spirit matters opened the door to using both Christian and traditional methods of defence, ‘a double barreled gun against the powers of evil spirits’ (Mtuze 2003:54). The only way to avert syncretism is to ensure that the convert experiences the Gospel as adequate for his/her whole life – every area – and especially in the most complex and mysterious issues of life (van der Walt cited in Cantrell 2005:270). The Christian faith in Africa today has to meet present needs which are ‘rooted in ... past traditions and those arising from contemporary developments ...’ (Gehman 1987:103). Christianity rightly taught will stress the reality of Christ’s permanent and real presence in the believer through the Holy Spirit. This needs to be a crucial part of discipleship of converts as without this knowledge of Christ’s real indwelling, both theoretically and experientially, ‘the African will turn back to other “Gods” in times of crisis and trial’ (de Jongh 2005:145).

Chapter 3 demonstrated how ATR impacts every area of the African’s daily life. The all-pervasiveness of ATR means that for Christianity to be contextually relevant in Africa it must impact every area of life, including the convert’s relationship to the spirit world. It needs to be



shown and demonstrated that Christianity can handle the issues of fear stemming from the traditional worldview and its supernatural forces. Butler (1993:1) and her husband worked as missionaries for twenty five years in Zaire blissfully unaware of the details of ATR. The result was that the people went to the Butlers for ‘physical, technical, and financial help’ and to the ATR doctors for ‘spiritual, emotional, and heart needs’ and help with evil forces (:2-3). After becoming informed of ATR their ministry changed and became fully contextual. The paper written by Mrs Butler (1993) is most helpful for understanding the challenges facing ministry in Africa, as with any traditional society (even in parts of modern societies where certain people have embraced a similar worldview to ATR), and how the Gospel deals with these evil forces.

Western educators working in churches and theological institutions in Africa need to appreciate how powerful the pull of the ancestral cult and occultic practices is; further, how strong the pressure is on Christian Africans by their extended families and clans to participate in the rites and rituals incompatible with Christianity, especially when their non-compliance will be thought to negatively affect the wellbeing of the wider family (also Brown 2000.) Rejection of the ancestral cult by Christians can even generate anger against them. Clearly this is a heavy burden to bear, which can lead to ostracism or something worse. Without doubt it is difficult for converted Africans to embrace a new and novel way of dealing with dissatisfied ancestors and powerful evil spirits, at least initially when Christianity has still to be tested in these areas. As Tshilenga (2005:106) puts it: the fear of the world of spirits ‘does not permit them to risk new endeavours.’ Again the importance of discipleship emerges in the areas of spiritual warfare.

As noted in Chapter 3, in ATR there are always two levels of cause and effect. To illustrate, consider a car accident caused by a wheel that came off due to the bolts not having been tightened properly when the car was serviced, and where a young person was killed and two others seriously injured. At one level the accident was caused by the wheel coming off because the mechanic was irresponsible. But ATR sees the physical world as intertwined with the spirit world. There is, therefore, another level of perceived cause, namely the spirit world. So the more important questions to be asked are: Who in the invisible world caused the accident by influencing the mechanic to fail to tighten wheel bolts and ensure there would be a particular passing car to be hit by the disconnected wheel? As noted in Chapter 3, death, especially if a ripe old-age has not been reached, is not considered natural or normal in ATR. So there must have been an unseen force or forces at work in this accident. This outlook requires discipleship that deals with spiritual *causes* of trials, illnesses, calamities, suffering

and death and the appropriate *remedies* and *responses*. It has been noted that growing spiritually through trials is foreign to ATR which tends to foster fatalism, and hence this aspect of Christianity needs careful attention. Discipleship should also include working extensively with the converts to ensure the consistent, practical and effective application of biblical solutions. An ideal leader needs to be both ‘traditional and progressive’ (Hovil 2005:133). This means he/she should guide the new convert with ‘as clear insight as the traditional diviners. For until Christians can bring to their own ministers their sicknesses and their feuds, the sterility of their wives and the rebellions of their sons, with a sure expectation of enlightenment and healing, they will continue to look elsewhere for help’ (Taylor cited in Hovil 2005:133).

AICs appreciate the need for holistic ministry in the African culture and therefore include in their worship ministries of power (certain rituals and prayer) against demons and for healing – they are at ‘the cutting edge of existential confrontation between the Christian message and evil as defined in African cosmology’ (Daneel 1990:221). They have stressed and demonstrated Christ as victor over Satan’s kingdom that ‘answers to their [the African’s] need for a powerful protector against these forces and powers’ (Mbiti cited in de Jongh 2005:147). The rapid spreading of Pentecostal or Spirit AICs is directly related to their success through the Holy Spirit over witchcraft. Daneel (:235) therefore encourages preachers to focus less on Christ and the Holy Spirit’s inner sanctifying work, and more on, with immediate demonstration, God’s triumph over all powers in heaven (above the earth) and on earth. There is a danger here of ‘over-emphasis on power encounter and a corresponding under-emphasis on truth encounter’ (Hesselgrave 2006:86) and the importance of balance is obvious. Hesselgrave (2006:90) notes that all power encounters in the Book of Acts ‘were either preceded or succeeded by revealed truth that explained their true Source and meaning lest they be misunderstood, misinterpreted and misapplied!’ Mutendi (cited in Daneel 1990:240-241) tells the story of her awful struggle not to give in to her aunt’s spirit and other spirits who wanted her to practice witchcraft. When repeated attacks on her health and strength became unbearable she went to an AIC church and was delivered from the spirits, sickness and weakness. This relevant ministry to the fears of the complex invisible world is a major reason for the AICs growth, as noted above. The AICs have demonstrated that the ‘greatest need among African peoples, is to see, to know, and to experience Jesus Christ as the victor over the powers and forces from which Africa knows no means of [effective] deliverance’ (Mbiti cited in de Jongh 2005:146). The result of the AICs’ successes ‘is that the guardianship of the ancestors becomes discredited and redundant’ (Nürnberg 2007:207).

This is especially so because of the AIC prophets and healers who can be consulted with problems and illnesses instead of the traditional diviners, herbalists and sangomas.

It needs restating that wholeness, well-being, strength, fulness and fulfilment (spiritual and physical) are looked for in this life in ATR because there is no anticipated significant improvement in wholeness, etc, after death and because it is thought possible if harmony is maintained in the spiritual hierarchy of the universe. This means relational problems, childlessness, and anything else that threatens personal and community well-being (whether spiritual, mental, emotional, psychological, physical or social) like drought, crop diseases, unemployment, poverty, sexism, societal evils, witchcraft, illness, racial discrimination, inequity, malnutrition, tribalism, hopelessness, personal conflicts, are taken very seriously. To avoid dealing with the horizontal dimension of sin and only be concerned with the vertical dimension of sin (that sin is against God) is to dichotomize or polarize the two dimensions of sin, incorrectly make the former peripheral to the Gospel, and to fail to address actual sin/evil in the African's experiential world (Mugabe 1995b:14,18). This leads to syncretism and prevents growth to spiritual maturity in Christ. In the Spirit or Pentecostal AICs 'the work of the Holy Spirit, comprises both eternal salvation for a redeemed humanity and a concretely experienced wholeness and well-being in this existence for those who place themselves in faith under his healing care' (Daneel cited in Mugabe 1995b:15). This approach prevents the converts from dealing with their horizontal needs through the sangomas/witch-doctors. However, an overemphasis on healing brings imbalance and leads to limited and warped spiritual understanding and experience and hence is to be guarded against. In Africa a whole Gospel for the whole person and his whole world needs to be preached and applied. This means teaching 'a comprehensive salvation which involves the individual as well as the society, the soul as well as the body, the present as well as the future' (Mugabe 1995b:18). Sadly many evangelicals have privatized the Gospel and limited it to 'the private, spiritual concerns of the individual' (Kretzschmar 1995:33). Kretzschmar (:34) notes that the Old Testament prophets 'often spoke in a single breath of the need for personal and social morality (Is 1:16-20; Micah 6:6-8; and Zech 8:14-17).' She (:39) mentions that Bosch demonstrated that Jesus' ministry was threefold: saving the lost, healing the sick and empowering the poor, and should be the Christian's pattern of living and ministry. 'The challenge for us in South Africa is for the Church as a community and as individual Christians in their personal capacity, to experience, preach and actively initiate the Gospel values of forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, justice, compassion and integrity within our country'

(:40-41). Kretzschmar (1995b:42) encourages African evangelical Christians to ‘relate the Gospel to culture, society, politics, the environment, family and community life.’

Missionaries have found that teaching difficult aspects or concepts of the Christian faith in terms of familiar concepts to the hearers is more effective. At one level this is important to adequately explain the new faith. The missionary ‘has to begin by assuming a common framework of language, of experience, of inherited traditions, of axioms and assumptions embodied in the forms of speech. He can only introduce what is new by provisionally accepting what is already there in the minds of his hearers’ (Newbigin cited in Peskett and Ramachandra 2003:76). African beliefs should therefore be used to facilitate the hearing of the Gospel message (Moila 2002:82). For example, presenting Jesus in terms of the greatest or proto ancestor who since his death, resurrection, and ascension acts as mediator between the Christians and God and influences their lives depending on how he is loved, obeyed and respected. Using the ancestor motif can also bring out the fact that Christians are brothers and sisters of Christ and also his spiritual children. Jesus can also be presented in terms of the kingship of the traditional chief or king, namely as ‘religious as well as the political head of his tribe’ (Bediako1990:25). He has also been described in terms of the traditional healer (Mugabe 1995b:14). The person and ministry of the Holy Spirit can also be explained in terms of ancestrology. ‘Because of the belief in ancestors, where the ancestors function as spiritual guides, as the ones who abide with us, as counselors, as mediators, and as comforters, Africans can better understand the Holy Spirit as having a supernatural origin when this native metaphor is applied as a way of participating in Christian theologising’ (Oladipo 1995:61). Further, the Holy Spirit ‘takes the place of the absent Christ’ and so his ministry can be seen as that of the great ancestor Jesus Christ (:61). Oladipo (:61) brings together the various aspects of the ancestor motif to explain the Trinity: ‘Thus, as God, “the Great Ancestor” is present and active through Christ, “the Proto Ancestor”, so does the “Proto Ancestor” continue to be present and active through the Holy Spirit, “the Grand Ancestor.” ’

The indigenous portrayals of Jesus – especially of his sacrificial and current intercessory and reigning ministry – help Africans better appreciate the person and work of Christ. In African theologies much research has been done on a Christology suited for Africa (cf. *Jesus in African Christianity: an Experimentation and Diversity in African Christology* 1989; de Jongh 2005; Bediako 1990; Williams 1993). Clearly leaders in the African church would benefit greatly in their ministry through careful study of this and similar material. Since Christ is central to Christianity every effort should be made and every legitimate cultural presentation of Christ harnessed in order to facilitate a sound and culturally relevant

understanding and experience of Christ. This is the only way to overcome syncretism and the resultant superficial encounter with Christianity in Africa: ‘... truly dynamic Christianity will only be possible in Africa when the foundation of the African’s whole life is built on Jesus Christ, conceived in specifically African categories’ (Bujo cited in de Jongh 2005:141). Jesus needs to be translated ‘into the tongue, style, genius, character and cultures of African people’ (Waruta cited in de Jongh 2005:142). Bediako (1990:43) notes that ‘In matters of religion there is no language that speaks to the heart and mind and to our innermost feelings as does our mother-tongue.’ This understanding should go hand-in-hand with an appreciation that one’s mother-tongue is a dynamic part of one’s culture – it is cultural-intensive.

Portraying Jesus in images from the recipient culture was used in the first-century church: e.g. ‘Dressing Jesus with the robe of the ancestor resembles the practice of indigenization which took place many centuries ago when Jesus was dressed in the garb of the emperor. Both can be seen as attempts at local theologizing and contextualization of the gospel’ (Craffert 1999a:70). Bediako’s (1992:431) study on the impact of culture on the second century Church led him to the following conclusion: ‘... our ancient analogues in early Hellenistic Christian thought show, that a positive evaluation of the pre-Christian tradition and an attempt to derive insights from it for the declaration of Christian convictions need not imply a theological syncretism.’ Hovil (2005:130-131) illustrates from the Bugandas how aspects of Christian faith and practice can be helpfully taught when presented in terms of cultural models or metaphors. ‘Reality becomes more real to any person and people when verbalized to them in the context and myth which is second nature to them – for we each see and hear through our cultural eyes and ears’ (Setiloane 2000:47). This approach is to start where Africans are and work from what is familiar in their culture and their cultural-based needs to similar areas in Christianity to show how in the Christian faith their needs can be fully met. Nolan (1995:76) goes further: ‘We cannot even think about the demands of the gospel or put them into practice except in terms of particular cultural expressions and symbols.’ The content of the unchanging Gospel of the kingdom must be translated ‘into verbal forms meaningful to the peoples in their separate cultures and within their particular existential situations’ (Nicholls cited in Hesselgrave 1980:208-209). Hesselgrave (:209) states that ‘the gospel becomes meaningful ... only as it is contextualized’, i.e. biblical doctrines will only be understood if communicated in the language the audience understands (:225). This is illustrated by the experience of Richardson (nd:3-19) in the dark jungles of New Guinea. He could not get the cannibals and headhunters to whom he was ministering to understand the work of Christ. Eventually he witnessed an event where two warring groups exchanged babies as a peace

offering to stop the warring. Once Richardson used the peace child analogy the people came to understand the work of Christ and conversions took place. 'Though the Sawi were strangers to our Judeo-Christian heritage, buried within their culture was an analogy which seemed to prepare them for my message' (:17). Here is an example of the importance of communicating in culturally relevant terms that prepared the way for the Gospel and a greater peace.

Based on Genesis 3, Muller (2000) sees guilt, shame and fear as the three main results of, or responses to, sin that make up the basic building blocks of worldview: Western culture is a guilt-based culture, Asian culture is shame-based and African culture is fear-based (fear of the spirit world). Clearly in ATR a wrong action is connected mostly with fear of spirit reprisal or sanction. The great need therefore in evangelism in Africa is to show how the Gospel sets one free from fear of evil spirits and ancestors and God. One problem here is that fear of the spirit world is often not as a result of one's own offensive deeds but others' jealousy for instance. Clearly there are limitations to connecting all one's fear of the spirit world to one's own sin and all sin with this fear. So sin cannot be entirely understood in the category of this fear. Evangelicals in contextualizing the Gospel need to be aware of over contextualizing and thus 'reducing it to nothing more than this or that culture' (Nolan 1995:77) and ending up with no Gospel or less harmful syncretism. Hovil (2005:129) gives an example of this situation. He notes the close parallels between leadership in the New Testament church and the Buganda. But in this case the similarities are unhelpful as the cultural norm is a dominating leadership: 'As the structure was so similar it was difficult to propagate an understanding of authority different from the secular pattern. Many church leaders therefore tended to be despotic. ... A bishop was tempted to see his primary task as ruling the people rather than serving them.' Nolan (1995:77) therefore notes that though the Gospel 'can only be preached in the language and the symbols of one culture or another', 'its message must be about how we transcend the limitations of any particular culture or subculture.' Hesselgrave (1980:207, emphasis added) perceptively captures this need: when the salvific core is adapted to various audiences it is not to be 'to their prejudice and taste in order to make the message *palatable*, but to their worldview and knowledge in order to make it *understandable*. The New Testament is replete with illustrations.' This means that when using the ancestor analogy to present Christ to Africans it is essential that Jesus is not merely conceptualized as another powerful ancestor, but the divine-human ancestor perfect in righteousness and godliness, exalted above all the ancestors and other spirits in position and power. It is important therefore for evangelicals to draw the line between such aids in communication of the faith and promoting syncretism.

Clearly similarities and analogies must be judiciously used. Oladipo (1995:60) states that the Christian should ask ‘what have I discovered in my African heritage and cultural background that can enrich my Christian experience as an African?’ Clearly there are features of any culture that will reflect biblical values and practices and even deepen them. However, Nolan (1995:77) wisely notes that even where the values of ATR and Christianity coincide, ‘the gospel is only the gospel if it also challenges believers to transcend or go beyond normal human values’ (Nolan 1995:77).

Mbuvi (2002) seeks to address the Gospel relevantly to Africans by accommodating the honour and shame values in African culture which have cultural affinities with the biblical worlds and at the same time being faithful to the Scriptures (:280). His contention is ‘that one of the primary core values that underlie both African culture and the biblical cultures is that of honor and shame.’ He (:282-283) uses Piers’ definitions to show the difference between guilt and shame: guilt is the emotion generated ‘whenever a boundary ... is touched or transgressed, shame occurs when a goal ... is not being reached. It thus indicates a ‘shortcoming.’ ... A sense of guilt arises from a feeling of wrongdoing, a sense of shame from a feeling of inferiority.’ Mbuvi (:284) quotes Geerhardus Vos on Genesis 2:25: ‘The divine interrogation reduces the sense of shame and fear to its ultimate root in sin.’ Clearly guilt and shame are related. ‘While guilt may be subsumed under shame, shame is the most basic reaction to the loss of innocence’ (:285). ‘Shame describes the condition of the rejected people of God, who, because of their sin, find themselves without God’s presence and fellowship’ (:285). Mbuvi shows that in African communities shame and honour operate at a horizontal level and ‘are group values underlining strong kinship ties and giving high value to ancestry’ (:287). Shame and honour ‘function as a social control, thus making it useful in the preservation of social equilibrium’ (:288). The African cultural experience of shame and honour can be used to describe the shame one should feel before God for one’s sins – for failing to reach God’s standards – and divine separation this causes and the honour experienced in forgiveness, reconciliation and adoption. But clearly guilt is a concept that is important for understanding atonement. Public church discipline in an African context could benefit from using honour and shame categories.

Nyende (2007: 361-381) argues that the Epistle to the Hebrews not only presents the superiority of Jesus to angels, Moses, Joshua, and the Aaronic priesthood and its *cultus*, but that his role as mediator is superior to the angels’ role as mediator. ‘Predominant in this pericope [Hebr 1:4-2:18] is the superiority of Jesus as a mediator over angelic mediators’ (:363). ‘... Christ’s mediation of God’s word or revelation is superior not just to that of the

prophets but also to the angelic one' (:364). Stanley (cited in Nyende :370) observes that the author of Hebrews 'begins with figures (mediators) that have the closest contact with God – the angels – and works out from there – Moses, Joshua and then Aaron and the priests.' Further, 'such a Christology is couched in the religio-cultural heritage of the time and fashioned for a given Christian community in a particular situation' (:377). In a situation of African religiosity, since ancestors can be understood to function as mediators between the living and the Ultimate Deity, Jesus can, as the definitive mediator, be presented in terms of an ancestor, but specifically the Greatest Ancestor (:377-378).

It is appropriate here to make the point that the Old Testament kings, priests, sacrifices, covenant and prophets all suffered from some limitations and imperfections. Christ came and perfectly fulfilled these roles and thereby was able to inaugurate a superior covenant. The faith of Israel, and its culture, are fulfilled in Christ. The implication of the Epistle to the Hebrews and many other biblical passages is that Christianity also fulfils other religions, including ATR. Justin Martyr emphasized this line: 'the Christian faith brought to fruition the insights of both classical Greek philosophy and Judaism' (cited in McGrath 2007:282); it 'fulfils the hints and anticipations of God's revelation ... through pagan philosophy' (:283). One of the major themes of this study is the relationship of ATR to Christianity. If Christianity fulfils all the religious longings that Africans seek through ATR, Christianity could be seen not as a threat to ATR, but a friend. Just as the Jewish law led to the superior ministry of Christ, so similarly ATR can be viewed as leading to Christ to take ATR to a higher level. But just how? The following list explains how: Christ is the greatest ancestor; the greatest king/chief; the greatest sacrifice; the greatest power against the kingdom of Satan; the one who takes the ancestors to a far greater state and place than their present ones; the one who opened the door to the transcendent God; the one who has formed a global community comprising people from every tribe throughout the world; and one who is also divine. The list could probably go on. It is understandable if these realities about Jesus are not known or fully understood, Christianity will be viewed as just another religion on a par with ATR or Islam or Buddhism. When this is the case Africans are often angered when evangelized by Christians as this smacks to them of the West thinking itself superior to Africa also in religion.

Chapters 3 and 4 strengthened the conclusion that Christianity grants fuller revelation and takes the religious experiences in ATR to new heights. This is why Mbiti (1969:277) takes the line that traditional religious systems are 'preparatory and even essential ground in the search for the Ultimate.' Nürnberger (2007:95-96) evaluates a number of similarities and dissimilarities between Christ conceived as an ancestor and the ancestors in ATR and



similarly shows how Christ can be seen as taking the ATR view of ancestors to a higher level. Clearly leaders in the evangelical churches in Africa need to see how helpful this approach to ATR is in evangelism and discipleship and utilize it. The idea of traditional religions being *evangelico preparatia* was noted in earlier Chapters.

It was also noted in Chapter 3 how much a part of African culture the rites of passage are. The son of one of the black faculty members at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape underwent the Xhosa circumcision rite. It was interesting to note how entrenched, important and even necessary it is considered amongst the amaXhosa. The writer has seen the pictures of the teenager after he came out of the bush with white 'paint' smeared over his body and a blanket around him and of the other rituals in the ceremony following his return from the bush where the circumcision was performed. Williams (1992:8) concludes from this that 'It is obvious that in this context, Christianity must provide fully in a ritual way for rites of passage, baptism being the obvious symbol of greatest importance.' This need can be seen in the area of countering spirits: to be delivered from fear of the spirit world, the church must 'confront the existential needs and fears of people in a ritually understandable and therefore psychological and religiously satisfying manner' (Daneel 1990:220). Mtuzze (2003) argues for a Christianity that essentially sanctifies and baptizes all features (rituals and ceremonies) of ATR. He shows how the 'hidden presences' (the deities, the living-dead, and malevolent spirits) form the basis of Xhosa spirituality – how 'Everything else flows from, and converges on them' (:1) (see Chapter 3 above). Mtuzze thus is fully aware that ATR (especially the beliefs about the ancestors) gives meaning to the African (:7), and that as a result life without all the elements of ATR becomes empty. He therefore feels that Africans cannot be expected to exist without accommodating this belief system (:89). He does not seem to feel the need to question these traditional beliefs and practices of which he even says, 'Admittedly, they could be as all superstition is, but the fact of the matter is that they have a very strong impact on the people's lives' (:79). He (:49) argues, as noted above, that the traditional beliefs and rites related to the ancestors can be fully accommodated in Christianity without detracting from the roles of Christ and the Holy Spirit. 'African fundamentalists argue very strongly that Christ and his role in Christianity should not be brought into conflict with the role of the ancestors in African society. Instead of playing one against the other, they need to be allowed to complement each other' (:54). 'Ancestrology and pneumatology can be correlated positively in such a way that the functions of the ancestors and the functions of the Holy Spirit could be understood to coexist in mutual coordination' (Olapido 1995:59). This position sounds more convincing when it is believed that ancestors 'are ultimately directed by God' (:61). In

Chapter 4 it was argued that the ancestral cult fails to give Christ and the Holy Spirit their rightful place, recognition and honour, and detracts from the Holy Spirit's person and ministry and the Lordship, centrality and preeminence of Christ. Other reasons were also given for the unscriptural nature of the ancestral cult. Evangelicals therefore cannot agree with Mtuze's claim that the ancestral cult can be practiced alongside orthodox Christianity. They see such combination as a recipe for undermining the Gospel and preventing meaningful Christian growth.

Mtuze (2003:11-18) shows that many Christian festivals came about through Christianizing pagan festivals. He (:11) wonders why so many Christians, especially the missionaries and Western Christians in Africa, have resisted this happening in Africa. But those festivals incorporated into Christianity were adjusted so they could be used in a Christian sense. Mtuze seems to advocate introducing ATR festivals and other ATR traditions without adaptation to eliminate syncretism. However, it has to be admitted that nominal, secular Christianity, including much evangelicalism, has taken certain Christian festivals, like Christmas and Easter, and turned them back into pagan festivals; and instead of worshipping God the people worship and serve the gods of materialism, power, status, rationalism, hedonism, education and many other gods. Sadly today Christianity in the West can be rightly accused of syncretism. Christendom, and here the writer thinks particularly of evangelicalism, needs to put its house in order before trying to preach to African Christians that syncretism is wrong.

Black priests in the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa 'have openly accused it of ... dragging its feet in becoming Africanised. The priests want to see the inclusion of African rituals in church ceremonies', e.g. invoking of ancestors to visit the people in prayer (Opplet 1999). Mtuze (2003:81-97) quotes with approval the introduction of traditional practices and rites into the life and worship of some black congregations in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA). He gives two examples: traditional healing and the ancestral cult. He (:94-95) quotes a concluding prayer to the ancestors by the priest in a service for the incorporation of traditional healers and their craft into the church: 'As you the family hosts [ancestors] are seated with the Lord we in this world believe that all you do pleases him. In that belief we then hand N... over to you so that you may lead him to Christ ... We hand him/her over to you saying may there be peace, and may his/her way henceforth be bright.' Brown (cited by Mtuze 2003:93) sees Christ as the proto ancestor, who 'takes precedence over the ancestors.' In this way Mtuze believes one can accommodate ancestors and Christ's lordship and pre-eminence. The biblical picture does not present ancestors as active in this world and operating in submission to Christ. The writer above argued that such a scenario would clash

with and detract from Jesus' supremacy in all things. Preskett and Ramachandra (2003:112) show how the balance between culture and avoiding syncretism is achieved: '... discern ... whatever is compatible with the gospel in all cultures and societies, affirming and nurturing their growth, but also exposing and confronting those things that are incompatible.' Or as Mbiti (cited in Stoltz 2006:12) states it:

...we must also, without fear and hesitation, bring the gospel to bear upon our culture in order to evaluate it, to judge it, to transform it. Because culture is created man, and because man is sinful, what he creates, however beautiful, however great, however cultivated it might be, it nevertheless bears the imprint of human sinfulness- ... Culture has its own demons, which only the gospel is equipped to exorcise and disarm.

Once the importance and implications of culture are recognized, African ways of singing, praying, preaching, structuring of services, length of meetings, decibel level of worship, emphasis on fellowship and socializing, etc, must not only be accommodated, but insisted upon. The missionaries wanted the African converts to worship God in a Western way unlike the Israelites who 'worshipped God through their culture, customs and traditions' (Ngada and Mofokeng 2001:4). Consider a Westerner coming to conversion through the evangelism of a Christian Indian. Forcing this convert to praise God in song using Indian tunes that for Westerners lack in melody and tunefulness would be most frustrating and unfulfilling. Clearly Christians must worship in ways that meaningfully express their joy, liberty and freedom in Christ. 'African culture needs to be studied, analysed, and utilized in the evolution of relevant spirituality and worship life of the Church' (Mbiti cited in Hovil 2005:133). Pityana (1995:177) states that it is through one's culture that faith is expressed. This means Christians from a particular culture must not be guilty of claiming that the Christian life can only be properly and fully experienced through their culture (Pityana 1995:177). Therefore, 'Participation [in] and expression of the faith will take many forms' (Pityana 1995:179). The writer has heard a number of black pastors from another African country preaching at black conferences in South Africa. These speakers had been heavily influenced by the West. Their preaching was totally Western in structure of sermon, style of preaching and illustrations. After one such sermon the writer chatted to the speaker and carefully informed him of how strong African culture is in South Africa and that most of the audience were pastors from the AICs where ATR plays an influential role. It was hoped that the visiting speaker's remaining sermons would be more contextually relevant. Sadly this was not the case. Here is an example of fellow blacks causing identity confusion and expecting black Christians, including those

they disciple, to express their Christianity in a foreign culture. This can only hold back the development of the African Evangelical Church.

The AICs are a movement that came into existence in reaction to the missionaries' Westernizing of African churches (Mtuze 2003:65). This was a burden for black Christians to bear, like the burdens the Pharisees laid on the people (Ngada and Mofokeng 2001:1-3). 'The AICs were not only established by seceding from the so-called mainline churches, but the Holy Spirit also encouraged blacks to establish most AICs spontaneously' (du Toit and Ngada 1999:2). Their approach is to ensure black converts 'stick to their original faith of being African in all respects and voluntarily accommodate the newly found faith according to the African Style' (du Toit and Ngada 1999:2). The elements in their worship services are mostly 'reminiscent of biblical symbols and African tradition' (Tshelane 2000:146). 'Common objects of worship among various AICs are the Bible, candles, flags, canes, sticks and, among some, hymn books' (:146-147). Their prophets and healers are initiated into the ministry not 'on the basis of competence in studies' (:147) and their ordained ministers might not have these gifts and be more interested in 'issues of administration' (:147). It can be seen that the AICs have not successfully avoided syncretism. Serving God in the AICs 'means to make offerings and sacrifices ... In this understanding of the service, the AICs are bringing the concept of communal spirituality into the service of God' (:150). Tshelane (2000: 149) prefers to talk of the AICs as ecumenical than simply syncretistic. Evangelicals would stop short of ecumenism/syncretism that undermines the Gospel and the preeminence and the Lordship of Christ. Because power for Africans is so important – 'What matters is power' (Williams 1992:13), the power of Christ through the Holy Spirit is emphasized in AICs -. Since Africans see the cross as showing weakness, it is essential in African churches to stress the resurrection and ascension of Christ, which focuses on Christ's power over sin, disease, death, demons and the ancestors (Williams 1992:14). In the light of Chapter 5 the emergence of the AICs was inevitable. The AIC movement has stimulated much research of its history, beliefs and practices. Even AIC leaders are writing about their movement (cf e.g. du Toit and Ngada, 1999). This dissertation will not be able to devote space to this literature. As representing a movement to produce genuine African Christians, it should be endorsed and celebrated. The faster growth of the AIC movement to that of the historical churches is clear testimony to the importance of the Gospel taking root in all cultures. Evangelicals would of course not sanction any syncretism in the AICs. Evangelicals do not see the situation of a local church practicing syncretism as something as harmless as some holding an immature view of Christian perfectionism as in Philippians 3:15: 'All of us who are mature should take such a

view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.’ Syncretism undermines the Gospel and always interferes with spiritual development. Gehman (1987:94-95) gives the following affirmations concerning culture in a Christian context to guide evangelical church leaders in Africa. Some of his categories are similar to those of Niebuhr’s (see Chapter 5 above), but Gehman’s are geared specifically to evangelicals:

**1. Culture as such is ordained by God from creation.**

God created man and woman so that society would be born and culture would be developed. ... In this sense, Christ is **for** culture.

**2. Culture since the Fall is corrupted by sin.**

... Every part of culture is affected by man’s sinful bent away from God and on himself. ... In this sense, Christ is **against** culture.

**3. Because man continues to be born in the image of God (albeit, a fallen image) and confronted with the revelation of God in nature and conscience, man’s culture can serve adequately to communicate the Gospel.**

Each culture has true insights into reality. ... In this sense, Christ is pleased to communicate **through** culture.

**4. The Gospel has been revealed by God for the purpose of transforming people and their culture.**

Some parts of culture may be adapted for the glory of God while other parts must be rejected. Most of culture may be preserved but must be transformed to agree more perfectly with the Word of God. In this sense, Christ **transforms** culture.

Conversion to Christ of an entire community avoids breaking up the powerful ties that hold communities together, thus avoiding the lone Christian. Clearly when a whole community embraces Christianity the transition for each person to Christianity is less traumatic. This means evangelicals in Africa should evangelize the whole group, and especially the chief/elders as conversion of the latter will more easily open the way to conversion of the group.

Clearly Chapter 5 implies that all church leaders working in Africa must ensure that the church is ‘an authentic African church’ (Nolan 1995:72). ‘The church must become African if it is to grow on the African continent’ (Villa-Vicencio 1995:116). In addition to the Gospel taking root in one’s culture, there is the supra-cultural dimension of the Gospel: one must look ‘more closely at culture in all its forms *and* at an understanding of the gospel which enables us to transcend any particular culture’ (Nolan 1995:72, emphasis added). Bosch (1991:427) states that there must be the affirming of ‘the essentially contextual nature of all theology’ and ‘the universal and context-transcending dimensions of theology’ – any localized inculturation

of the Gospel or theology 'is a discourse about a universal message' (:457). Further, the universal dimension is well captured by Volf (cited in Preskett and Ramachandra 2003:97): '... at the very core of Christian identity lies an all-encompassing change of loyalty ... departure is part and parcel of Christian identity'. 'Christianity is a radical faith and it must transform sinners radically' (Kato 1975:38). Perskett and Ramachandra (2003:79) powerfully state the connection between culture and the supra-cultural elements of Christianity:

In conversion, the gospel permeates the intellect, emotions and attitudes of an individual in such a way that everything that makes him what he is – his past, his network of relationships, his work, his thought-patterns and moral processes – are given a new direction; namely towards Christ. Conversion is about a radical reorientation of life ... It's a lifelong process of discovery and transformation.

The universal nature of Christianity – its supracultural nature – is reinforced by the fact that 'Christianity is, among all religions, the most culturally translatable ... able to be at home in every cultural context without injury to its essential character' (Bediako 1990:43). 'Unlike say, the Qu'ran, which when translated, becomes less than its fullness in Arabic, the Bible in the vernacular remains in every respect the Word of God' (:44).

It goes without saying that where English is not well known, discipleship in the mother tongue is necessary, especially at the grassroots level (see Hovil 2005: Chapter 7).

Section 4 has demonstrated that 'Both the under-contextualization and the over-contextualization of the Christian faith constitute open invitations to syncretism' (Hesslegrave 2006:79).

Chapter 5 and this section have demonstrated how relevant and important it is in evangelism and discipleship that they are conducted in the recipient's culture and not a foreign one. It is only in one's culture that Christianity can be fully, meaningfully and satisfyingly experienced. This means that biblical truths need to be, as far as possible, presented with helpful illustrations and analogies from the hearer's culture. This is why qualified teachers in Africa should write their own theologies because then they will be culturally relevant. They need to be well read in theological books from outside Africa in order to broaden and sharpen their understanding, but they need to write specifically for African Christians. This section of the Chapter has opened up the vital need to avoid the mistakes of the missionaries which held back the growth of the church in Africa and the development of African society. Discipleship in Africa can only be effective if the relationship of culture to evangelism and discipleship is understood and accommodated.

## **5. The writer's insights gained at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape on the discipleship needed in African evangelical churches with further**

## **reflection on the African situation, the South African in particular**

This dissertation was the climax of the writer in his work at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape. The principles for Christian discipleship that emerge from this study began to present themselves at the coalface of classroom interaction with black students. This was because the writer and students had the courage to move the debates and sometimes diatribes from the periphery to the heart of Africa's history and present context, ever guided by commitment to Scripture and the success of the African Church and Africa. With the completion of the dissertation the writer felt ready to enter the student world with a new strategy and energy to help both black and white students face the past and present realities of Africa with new eyes and the future with real hope. The following perspectives and approaches were tortured out of difficult classroom sessions and are considered vital if the Evangelical Movement in Africa is to become a transforming force in the African continent. They are clearly relevant to the discipleship process of new converts in present-day Africa.

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### **5.1 Facing the past**

#### **5.1.1 The importance of confession, repentance, forgiveness, and restitution**

The writer's sixteen and a half years at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape were an ever deepening process of confession and repentance. At the dawn of the new South Africa his understanding of apartheid as experienced by the blacks was almost nil; and therefore at that time his sense of guilt and shame over apartheid was minimal and superficial, though genuine. This steadily changed as a result of hundreds of hours per year of dialogue with his black students. These formal and informal times slowly and increasingly opened up to the writer the depths of pain and deprivation suffered by the blacks (and coloureds and Indians) during the old South Africa. During these interactive sessions the writer worked hard at disciplining himself to listen carefully, openly, empathetically and passionately, and to resist the temptation to soften his students' accounts of their apartheid experiences. Whites in South Africa find it extremely difficult to grasp the profound effects of land loss, toleration 'as useful workers and nothing more' (Davidson 2001:342), poverty, cultural malignity, political disempowerment, the migratory labour system, job reservation, overcrowding in townships (and now in informal settlements) far away from economic hubs, undeveloped rural areas, education in a second or third language with mostly unqualified and lazy teachers, high population growth rate, and limited access to medical treatment. The missionary Ludwig

Harms (cited in Bosch 1991:310) described the Afrikaner settlers' treatment of the blacks as involving 'every possible injustice and violence against the poor pagans.' Year by year the writer witnessed the damage in the following areas of his students' lives: emotional, spiritual, intellectual, educational, social, creative, discipline, initiative, and personal identity. The 'humiliation and exploitation of colonialism and apartheid are woven forever as a bitter thread in the black cultural fabric' (L'Ange 2005:500). Sadly, for most blacks nothing has significantly changed since the inception of the new South Africa, except perhaps an improvement in self-esteem due to black majority rule. As the writer's emotional and mental enlightenment on the short-term and long-term impacts of apartheid advanced, his level of guilt and confession increased accordingly. He was amazed at how his appeals for forgiveness for the sins of apartheid and his involvement in maintaining the system, if only through participation, were graciously received and granted, and how this whole process opened up a far deeper level of communication with his black students.

The writer's new journey with his black students through the corridors of apartheid convinced him that reparation is imperative and morally inescapable. It is not only essential for the success of the South African story, but it is the evidence of true repentance and confession of the sins of apartheid. Since April 1994, the birth of the new South Africa, there have been great, sincere efforts to bring whites to true penance and compensation and blacks to true forgiveness of the whites. Frankly, the writer feels the results have been disappointing, including in the churches. The writer's training and position have positioned him to play a part in reparation in mostly the non-economic areas, especially in the spiritual and personality and identity realms, which have positive spin-offs in the social, economic and development fields. He has worked hard on liberating his black students from the shackles of inferiority, on facilitating their full forgiveness of the apartheid perpetrators so that bitterness does not destroy them, on releasing their full potential, and on equipping them spiritually, educationally and theologically to be able to confidently and proudly serve God, in single and multi-cultural, multi-racial churches in Africa, and anywhere outside Africa. He led the Institute to a commitment to training that was supplementary, remedial, relevant, holistic, and that would bring wholeness in all areas of human life, and to being better equipped in teaching and promoting-facilitating learning. The Institute embraced a non-discriminatory acceptance policy that provided financial help for those previously disadvantaged and who genuinely could not afford the fees (the Institute embarked on raising bursaries where needed; it also sometimes succeeded in raising travel and living bursaries).



The writer believes it is time, and long overdue, for churches, Christian organizations and Christian businesses to run sustained knowledge and skills transference programmes and to seek to provide more job prospects. Reparation at only the level of monetary donations will not be sufficient or the best reparation for the effects of apartheid. The Institute is attempting to not only empower its students spiritually, strengthen their African identity and self-worth, and impart skills for pastoral ministry, but also to train in community development. The Institute daily encounters the great need for job creation in Africa. It therefore has a plan to train its students in the starting of a small business. This is crucial as most of the black students have not been trained in any career and will be serving poor churches requiring them to be self-supporting. The writer has been told by black students that about ninety-five per cent of AIC pastors are self-employed due to necessity. The Institute is planning to launch a postgraduate one-year program as soon as it has sufficient funds and trainers that will include a course in church planting, a new church plant in an informal settlement, courses in theology of work and development, a course on how to run a micro-business and the start up of such a business. Such training would also enable graduates to open up work opportunities for unemployed members of their congregations, and this in turn will enable their churches to eventually support them. Clearly the range and amount of pastoral ministry of pastors, especially discipleship, suffer gravely when they have to work in another full-time career to support themselves and families. This is confirmed by the writer's black students' experience. The writer has learned from the students in AICs that congregations do not support their minister. This situation can only be corrected through wise and sensitive teaching on Christian stewardship, which would include the biblical injunction to support the pastor. The writer taught his students these principles so their discipleship of their converts could be more effective and produce a biblical approach to financial stewardship so that more pastors could be supported in order to devote themselves full-time and without distraction to shepherding the local church.

Whites in South Africa need to appreciate that Western progress has been directly linked to opportunities and privileges. Any ethnic group/tribe in the third and second worlds could produce the same results as seen in first-world countries if it was exposed to first world opportunities and advantages. The writer's wife, a pre-school teacher, has taught a class of Zulu children, a class of Xhosa children, and classes of white children (now she only teaches mixed classes). Her findings have been that there is the same percentage of gifted, average and below average children and same range of personalities in the three groups. It also needs

to be noted that the apartheid system in South Africa, and slavery and segregation for years in the USA, held back the scientific, technological and social progress of blacks. Also the West reached the point first from which scientific and technology could develop rapidly. It seems, therefore, unfair to compare the progress of blacks and whites in the world. When this knowledge is communicated to the writer's black students, and especially when their full humanity is recognized, their self-image and identity immediately begin to break free from the chains of inferiority. It has been noted in Chapter 5 that such healing is a prerequisite to the forging of a confident and successful basis for personal, social, and economic development. However, below it is observed that there are other factors other than opportunities that are necessary for development in Africa.

#### 5.1.2 Learning from the past

It was the breakthrough in human interaction and understanding between the writer and his black students that paved the way for them together *to interrogate the past afresh* in order to *find real solutions for the future* of South Africa and Africa at large. Because of the evangelical nature of the Institute, the students are taught to analyse Africa's past and present problems from not only a physical-social-political perspective, but more importantly from a spiritual one with the latter influencing the former. ATR's and Christianity's approaches to societal problems are very similar as they both emphasize spiritual causes. The writer stresses to his students that though this similarity makes Christianity's diagnosis and solutions easier for the African to understand, the Christian must work exclusively from a biblical worldview. The Institute seeks to avoid naive and nostalgic reflection on Africa's past. Some examples of negative features from Africa's past will illustrate why this approach to Africa's past should be avoided. The Xhosa tradition of offering an ox to the ancestors requires the ox to bleat before being killed, otherwise the ancestors will not accept the sacrifice and therefore not be positively present. It has already been noted that this opens the door to torturing the animal in order to get a bellow, something that happened in an African traditional ceremony at St George's Park in Port Elizabeth: 'The ox in question was tortured for some 15 to 20 minutes. ... It [an animal] gets stressed, and feels pain in exactly the same way any other living being feels these things. It is a sentient creature' (Rademeyer 2008). One illustration from pre-independence Kenya illustrates the point that not all past practices are to be viewed positively: 'I've seen this in my time – cows with their teats hacked off and strangled cats and disemboweled women, and menstrual fluid mixed with the human sperm and animal dung and stewed brains for oathing' (Ruark 1962:179). After circumcision the Masai young man had

‘to ignore the pain and blood and demonstrate his manhood by having successful intercourse with a hole in the earth. And in other fertility ceremonies some of the proven warriors have to do [this] ... by she-asses’ (:210). During their fifteen or so years of warriorhood before they got married, the Masai men had ‘free access to all the maidens’ (:210). During the colonial period there ‘was not the Masai to kill you now [during colonialism], nor the Nandi; there were not the Samburu to come across the Laikipia from the sere north; there were not even the Meru to quarrel with, nor the Kambas to contend with. A man could usually sleep soundly of nights in his own house. There were no real famines ... Plagues and epidemics no longer ravished the land [because of Western farming and medicine]’ (:239). During the African slave trade ‘Some African chiefs sold their own people, others engaged in wars and slave raids against neighbouring tribes to capture victims for the trade’ (Hammond nd:1). Africa ‘suffers the consequences of the sin of the great western powers ... [but] it suffers also the consequences of its own sins. She has to be delivered from them all’ (Tshilenga 2005:204). Desmond Tutu (cited in Baur 1998:488) states that ‘Things happen on most African states which are worse than what happened in apartheid South Africa.’ After the Apostle Paul’s conversion he changed his assessment of certain of his previous beliefs and behaviour. He did this because they were now seen to be wrong from a Christian perspective; further, he took the blame for his pre-conversion ignorance, pride and complicity in a number of murders. The writer believes that his black students through conversion to Christ can be challenged with a broader perspective on the old South Africa, including on how the struggle against apartheid was conducted. The writer has come to discern how necessary this approach is to the past in Africa as it holds the key to future growth. If black Africa’s interpretation of its past is bogged down in blaming the West, invaluable lessons will be missed that will frustrate future development. Africa needs a release of new energy into the debate about how to transform the continent.

#### 5.1.2.1 Was the cost of Africa’s liberation too great?

##### 5.1.2.1.1 The moral legacy

The destructive tactics used and mastered during the liberation struggle are now increasingly being unleashed by the masses against the present ANC-ruled government in South Africa as witnessed in violent, destructive strikes and similar campaigns against poor service delivery at municipal level. In the political struggle for independence, and democracy in South Africa, the end often justified any means, including promises not capable of being fulfilled, a culture of lawlessness, revenge and demand. It can be argued that the wave of violent criminality sweeping South Africa today is a legacy of the struggle. The fallout was ‘radioactive’

immorality that has left no area of life and society untouched. The educated architects and promoters of the struggle programme must take the greatest responsibility for the current moral morass that threatens to bring the country to anarchy or authoritarian rule and greater poverty. It was their superior education and training that enabled them to manoeuvre the uneducated and poorly educated masses into a legitimate struggle. But it was their methods, many morally defensible, their drive, their vision, their globe trotting, their designed underground structures, their rhetoric, and their reckless and manipulative promises that ultimately brought the country to the present, ubiquitous moral crisis. The writer understands that there were other factors that influenced the struggle strategies and outcome (see below). But ultimately it was the struggle leadership – inside and outside the country. With hindsight, the morality of certain of their motives and aspects of their modus operandi must now be questioned (see below on the leadership legacy). Evangelicals would say it was spiritual and moral naivety and blind, sinful humanism (see below) that were the underlying problems in the cadre leadership. This paragraph has presented a view of the liberation struggle that the writer's black students find difficult to hear and contemplate (see below).

However, the writer was quick to note with the students that the church is surely the real culprit of Africa's moral bankruptcy. The white churches should never have allowed apartheid to ever see the light of day in South Africa. At over 70% of the population, peaceful boycotting by *all* church members would have brought the apartheid government to its knees very quickly. The writer encourages his students to conclude that both white and black Christians bear a terrible burden of guilt, mostly unacknowledged and unconfessed, for the apartheid years and slow development in Africa. Like the prophet Jonah and Ninevah, it is the church that is the key to Africa's salvation; but she first needs to repent. The writer believes that only when the enormity of the failure of Africa's Christians and culpability are grasped, will the Church be ready to play a transforming role in Africa. The writer holds the view that before new converts in Africa can be properly disciplined to play such a role in society, the church leaders need to be re-disciplined or disciplined for the first time and better trained in pastoral ministry. Clearly the theological colleges and seminaries in Africa need transformation so that their graduates will be competent and committed to effective discipleship of converts. The writer believes that Africa has had to pay a great price for inadequate discipleship of most of its millions of converts to Christianity and successful future development depends on the success of discipleship in its churches.

#### 5.1.2.1.2 The educational legacy

Why did black communities in the old South Africa not decide to make education a first priority as it is a prerequisite for development and liberation? Why did the Mandela generation and its protégés (e.g. Thabo Mbeki) not influence the wider black population to make education the prime focus on its social agenda, no matter what the political or educational climate? Why did the black communities not insist on compulsory attendance of learners and teachers at school (a goal that is still unreached today)? Why did they not put their best people into black education and demand and honour top quality delivery? Why did they not make their educational system the pride of the black people – starting with the Bantu Education system and then progressing to higher standards of education with or without permission and adequate funding from the apartheid government? Certain black schools in the new South Africa have demonstrated that successful education can be delivered if teachers and learners are motivated and committed to the educational process. Why did the black people not put as much energy and sacrifice into education as they expended on getting rid of apartheid, especially if an educated populace was vital to the success of a liberated South Africa? Excellent performance and achievements in black education would have proved that blacks were not inferior to whites as whites thought or chose to believe. This would have done more than any other effort to show the immorality of apartheid's black educational system and ensure its demise as well as that of other features of the apartheid system. Why did the children boycott schools and universities and destroy their educational facilities (and other symbols of the apartheid system) when this would make liberation somewhat empty as a generation without adequate education would be ill-qualified to make the new South Africa an economic and social success? As Ndungane (2004:16) notes: 'On 16 June the Black Consciousness Movement, led by Steve Biko, erupted like a volcano and spread throughout the country as school children revolted, initially against writing tests in Afrikaans, but ultimately against apartheid. The cost was high; children died in their hundreds, schools were destroyed, and a whole generation effectively lost out on any education at all as they boycotted classes.' A 'lost generation' of youth was thus 'foisted on a young democracy' (Jansen 2008:184). Ndugane (:18) tries to soften the negative impact by stating that 'history will show that this was a worthwhile sacrifice.' This confirms the writer's belief that the struggle leaders did not make serious efforts to prevent this holocaust. Ndugane, however, cannot avoid acknowledging the terrible price to the future South Africa when he states that 'those of us left in the wake of their actions are duty bound to ensure that this never happens to our children again.' If the above approaches to black education had been followed, Bantu

education would not have left such a terrible legacy of educational problems for which 'it is increasingly clear that there are no quick fixes' (Allais 2008:26).

It is interesting to observe that the struggle leaders knew the value of education from their experience and from its observed key role in economic development, especially if the post-apartheid government was to govern competently and build a stronger and faster-growing economy. This was evidenced in their sending of their children to private schools, locally or outside South Africa. They, therefore, must have appreciated what the tragic consequences for the new South Africa would be if the masses of black children were to sacrifice their education on the altar of the struggle against apartheid. Even if they plead that they never desired the struggle to take such an educationally destructive course, it was inevitable given the growing militarization of the guerilla-warfare against the state's symbols. As a result a whole generation of black children suffered educationally and thus forfeited tertiary education. This fiasco meant that the school generation of the seventies and eighties could not provide their children with a home environment without poverty and with proper educational stimulation and nurturing. No wonder the Matric pass rate of their children today is so low and their failure rate at universities so high. Even more disturbing, only a fraction of those entering school at the grade 1 level finish their schooling. The sad fact is that many who drop out of school 'turn to anti-social activities that in part explain the wave of crime sweeping the country' (Jansen 2008:183) (see below). Clearly 'a poor schooling system threatens all of us' (:183). Further, only a small percentage of matriculants pass the crucial subjects of Mathematics and Science needed to produce graduates necessary for technological, industrial and economic development. People working in higher education, who are totally behind the speedy advancement of blacks at every level of society, are daily reminded of how generally poor teaching and educational support in the majority of black schools and homes respectively still are. The educational backlog amongst most blacks foments negative economic growth, unemployment, poverty, frustration, anger and often crime. More tragically, humanly-speaking the educational-training gap between black and white will never be closed, except in a relatively few cases. Is political liberation without economic liberation the kind Africans fought for? Was the price for their liberation too high?

The writer finds it painful for his black students to accept that blacks need to take a share of the blame for the legacy of the current educational crisis. It is so much easier to blame apartheid exclusively for the shocking state of education in South Africa today. The writer constantly reminds the students that wrong diagnosis of the state of the nation's education system will prevent a true solution being found. Once again the finger needs to be pointed at

the church. If children of Christian parents had been evangelized and disciplined at home and church the story would have been significantly different.

#### 5.1.2.1.3 The leadership legacy

Most of Africa's under-development must be attributed to its leaders. Nkesiga (2005), a Ugandan, tackles in his doctoral thesis this matter of Africa's generally corrupt and incompetent leadership and its lack of concern for the people. He argues that the problem is a moral one. President Mugabe of Zimbabwe is a good example. His government has ruined this country. Africa has made some diplomatic efforts to reign him in and bring about a successful unity government to ensure economic recovery, but have so far failed. Africa has stood by him with adoring reverence and approval of his leadership during his nearly thirty-year dictatorship. Africa's people need to take responsibility for voting in its leaders or tolerating them. Often this happens out of fear. But this is no valid reason (cf the struggle in South Africa to overthrow the apartheid leaders). It has been said that a country gets the leaders it deserves. Africa, therefore, should not only blame its leaders for its wasteland. Its masses share equal blame. The ATR emphasis on respect for the elders would partly account for this scenario. The holding on to power in Africa even when a leader became unpopular 'may well reflect the role of the royal ancestor who never ceases to rule from the realm of spirit-power! Certainly praise-names and titles of some African presidents bear ancestral overtones' (Bediako1990:26-27). The Zimbabwean story is an example of ATR taking a value to an extreme (see below). As noted in Chapter 3, this virtue of respect for leaders in Christianity is influenced by other virtues to ensure that honouring and obeying leaders are not absolute and without exception.

Sunter (cited in Venter 1997:290) graphically warns against the danger of electing dictator-saviours when a country is faced with high unemployment: 'Both Mussolini and Hitler were elected by the unemployed to improve their lot.' Africa's leaders have all claimed to be saviours, during election times and after and including successful *coup de'tat* leaders. The African populace needs to get the message of this paragraph loudly and clearly. Christianity does not permit dictatorial leadership. Democracy can ensure that the people can prevent a dictator coming to or staying in power (unless a majority party puts a dictatorial leader or leadership into power – an example of a country getting the leaders it deserves). Therefore a huge number of well disciplined evangelicals in a democratic country can prevent a despotic leader being voted into power and ensure such a leader is voted out of power. Above it was noted that evangelicals prefer a democratic form of government. A well functioning democracy stands perhaps the best chance of achieving a government that benefits the

majority. It has been noted that ATR does not harmonize with a multi-party democracy as witnessed in the ubiquitous inter-tribal political wars in African countries. The story of Africa's wars is replete with power-mongering leaders unwilling to share power other than on their terms. Baur (1998:488) notes that 'the unrestrained hunger for self-enrichment and power of the African politicians ... worked ... towards creating the present misery in Africa.' The writer found that his black students tended to blame all Africa's troubles firstly on colonialism and apartheid (South Africa), and only secondly on their leaders (see below). He strives to get them to appreciate that leaders do not emerge and rule in a vacuum. Even if colonialism provided a bad example and mould for the first batch of independent leaders, the leaders were moral creatures capable of moral rule, though imperfect. Davidson (2001:362) notes 'that all the legacies of the colonial period failed to work in any sense valuable to a majority of the people.' This would seem to be because the black leaders were intoxicated with power and a desire to control. There was nothing to stop the newly independent countries under the direction of their leaders to change policies and legacies of the colonial period to ensure the majority benefited.

The writer helped his black students see the price Africa has paid for its liberation through immoral liberation leaders. The African story after independence could have been so very different if it had had qualified, compassionate, visionary, accountable, moral leaders. Again the finger needs to be pointed at the churches. Based on their huge numbers, evangelical churches and Christians should have played a much bigger role in influencing the choice and rule of their countries' leaders. What went wrong? The writer would say the kind of discipleship of converts was the major problem.

#### 5.1.2.2 The cultural legacy

It has been noted in different parts of the dissertation that many of Africa's development problems are rooted in aspects of ATR. This should not surprise Africans as traditional cultures are universally static and not conducive to development found in the modern world. The African worldview favours contextual rather than linear thinking as noted above. This logic is not suited to technological development. Unless the African worldview is appropriately adjusted/changed, development in Africa will be stifled and the gap between first-world countries and countries in Africa will be widened. The writer found that critically analysing other worldviews to show their strengths and weaknesses was most helpful to his black students. It showed that it is not only ATR that needs modification in areas. The writer often found it very difficult for his black students, especially the intellectually gifted ones, to see how many of Africa's problems stemmed from ATR. This is understandable as every



person wants to believe the best about his/her culture and its achievements. To do less would diminish one's self-worth and identity. This also illustrates the truth that worldview is not easily changed. The writer tried to impress on his students that through conversion and discipleship the transition to a fully biblical worldview could be made without damage to the African identity and self-worth and resulting mental and emotional pain. He found it important to debate the need for a number of critical changes in Africa's worldview rather than just outward cultural changes (cf Tshilenga 2006:183). Once again the importance of appropriate Christian discipleship is seen, as it has the power to help converts embrace the Christian worldview, conducive to progress and development, without changing their African identity.

The writer discovered that the black students battled with economic competition as they tended to focus on the loser rather than on the improvement of standards and cheaper prices. Africans place 'great value on co-operation and the sharing of resources [redistribution of resources and no hoarding] rather than on competition against others' (Pato 2000:94). This problem has been seen in the taxi industry's resistance to the introduction of the Rapid Bus Transit system in the country. This cultural background does not sit comfortably with the capitalistic economic system where certain individuals are able with sufficient initiative, dedication, drive and hard work to get very rich, because it disturbs the unity and harmony through jealousy and the creation of a different, higher social stratum. The writer witnessed a version of this problem at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape. The black students were generally very poor and hence needed desperately to earn extra money. Two white students saw the need and approached some black students about them running a tuckshop to alleviate their financial distress. The white students were able and willing to keep the tuckshop stocked if some black students were prepared to operate the mini shop. Another incentive was that the white students would not take any money for their services – all the profits would accrue to the black students operating the venture. The black students deliberated and then declined to take up the offer as only some of them would benefit financially. In other words, if the group did not benefit equally it would not be culturally acceptable. 'Personal ambition and pursuit of self-interest are played down and take second place to family or community interests. As a result, people fear those who surpass others too obviously in wealth, power or influence. The basis of this fear is that such persons become a public danger, and are likely to use their surplus for selfish purposes' (Pato 2000:94). Is it not time to face this and other ATR impediments to development at both the human and economic levels?

The writer discussed with his black students the different approaches to time in Africa and the consequences in the competitive free market system. Mbiti (1969:17) notes that in Africa there is 'virtually *no future*.' '*Actual time* is therefore what is present and what is past ... people set their minds not on future things, but chiefly on what has taken place' (:17). He goes on to say that people 'have little or no active interest in events that lie in the future beyond, at most, two years from now' (:19). Williams (2008: '6') therefore states that 'behind the lack of black progress is a cultural conviction, and I would locate the heart of the matter in the attitude to time.' The African's traditional approach to time will need to be modified in order for African countries to become more productive and competitive and self-sufficient. Christianity, in contrast to ATR, has a linear concept of time. Everything God has brought into existence is moving towards a future climax of perfection at the return of Christ. For the Christian, his/her life is a journey forward to greater conformity to Christ's likeness which is to be fully imparted at the *parousia*. Clearly Christianity is not only compatible with progress, but demands it; there is nothing static or cyclic about time according to Christianity. During human history human beings are to manage the earth to ensure their survival and human development, which means growing in scientific knowledge, in technological know-how and in promoting development, especially with the world's present population size and astronomical growth-rate. This requires that governments and businesses today need to have long-term planning. Discipleship of Christians in Africa, therefore, needs to take Western and biblical views of time into account. However, one would not want Africans to become slaves to time and only future-oriented and forget the past. Disconnection from one's past fosters alienation, lack of direction, cosmic loneliness, and lostness, none of which are conducive to mental, emotional and social health and development (see Chapter 2). The African approach to time has many positive elements, which are scarce commodities and therefore needed in the West. Since the West's and Africa's perspectives on time have value, we have an example where cultures can learn and borrow from each other.

Mbiti (1969:221) is sceptical of any merger of the two approaches to time. He warns that the modern view of time exported to Africa cannot be fused with the retrospective focus – to think otherwise is an illusion; and while this is attempted 'the situation will continue to be unstable if not dangerous.' It seems, therefore, that he may be saying that if Africa wants to achieve much-needed development, she must embrace only one perspective on time, namely the Western one. It is, however, more probable that he means Africa must stick with its indigenous view of and approach to time and not to attempt to mix this with the Western and biblical views and approaches. If this is his advice, it provides little hope for significant and

desperately needed development on the continent. The writer has argued in Chapter 5 that some cultural borrowing and shedding can and need to be achieved in the modern world. It also showed that Christianity has the power to make the necessary changes in one's worldview after conversion without causing identity fracture and other major psychological problems. Christianity offers the possibility of a healthy past, present and future focus, that produces maximum development – the focus on the past and the present is to strengthen the focus on the future and thus achieve greater productivity. Mbiti's reservation, however, cannot be lightly dismissed. Is the ATR view of time incompatible with the West's view? If this is so, Africa will need to discard her system for the West's system if she wants much-needed advancement. The writer believes that the West's use of time is not altogether biblical as it overlaps into a form of idolatry because it is dictated by the 'almighty dollar' – all time is offered on the altar of the god of wealth. Further, materialism empties humanity of its true qualities. If Mbiti's skepticism about fusing African and Western time perspectives is justified, and the writer from his experience with his black students believes he might be, then a radical cultural change in attitude to time, which will include embracing time management and using time to bring about progress in every area of humanity, is required by Africans (Christian and non-Christian); but the idolatrous Western approach to time is to be avoided.

Benn (2002:6-12) contrasts the three main paradigms that shape the perception of disease – its cause, prevention and healing: the scientific framework; the religious framework; and the traditional framework. He shows that no one paradigm on its own is a sufficient approach to illness. In the case of HIV the scientific model cannot explain the origin of the virus beyond the likelihood that it crossed the species barrier from chimpanzee to human about 1930 and developed by mutation dictated by chance. From a traditional perspective the mystery surrounding the virus, the size and devastation (suffering and death) of the pandemic, the unsuccessful discovery of a cure, and the apparent role of chance and mystery in its spread, all suggest the virus is caused and spread by evil powers. The religious approach would be to see the virus as a judgment by God or at least a message of divine disapproval of sexual immorality. The traditionalist, who believes nothing happens by chance and therefore there is a reason for a particular event which should be exposed (Fresen 2000:186), looks for somebody or witchcraft as the source. Clearly only a change of worldview will make possible an effective offensive against the problem.

Nicholson (2001) conducted a study into the possible influence of the Xhosa male circumcision rite of passage into manhood on Xhosa men and the wider society. He states that 'It has been widely observed that the turning point toward moral and spiritual weakness in

young [Xhosa] men consistently happens at circumcision' (:4). He states that there is 'An unnatural urge in initiates to demonstrate their manhood through sexual intercourse with women, especially virgins' as this is taught as the only way to gain complete healing of the penis (:4). He mentions the high rate of adolescent sexual activity. He then refers to the rarity of faithful husbands and boyfriends. Pisani (cited in Dommissie 2009b:11) notes in her book, *The Wisdom of Whores, Bureaucrats, Brothels, and the Business of Aids*, that in Eastern and Southern Africa there is more HIV than anywhere else 'because both men and women are more likely to have several sex partners at one time and because there are many untreated sexually-transmitted infections and not much circumcision', and because 'men in most parts of Africa are still less likely to use a condom when they have sex with someone they're not married to than they are in Western countries.' See 5.2.7 below. Nicholson (:4) also mentions the prevalence of the social vices of alcoholism, control over women, domestic violence and idleness (this probably mostly through unemployment) among the amaXhosa men. He then notes that initiates are 'introduced into a traditional brew of beer to demonstrate their acceptance as men' and taught that 'women must be subject to their control as their exclusive role is to meet their sexual needs, be child bearers and homemakers' (:4). He finally observes that Christian Xhosa men often lack spiritual vitality and maturity, including the leaders, and that there are few Xhosa men in the churches (:4). He makes the statement that 'No pastors' sons are known to have followed their fathers into the ministry' (:4). This conclusion about the absence of sons walking in their fathers' pastoral footsteps came as a result of his consultation with 'evangelicals of various racial and denominational backgrounds who have thought deeply on the meaning and implications of the circumcision rite in the Xhosa context' (:1) and his own experiences of Xhosa churches. He finally states that 'Spiritual bondage [to Satan] leads to material bondage [poverty]' (:4). Nicholson (:4) does not deny that the amaXhosa have faced grave negative socio-economic factors, but he believes they do not alone explain 'why [Xhosa] men do not nurture stable families [with adequate financial provision] and provide powerful spiritual leadership' (:4).

His final conclusion from all his observations and research is that 'Satan is using his pact with Xhosa men [through the circumcision rite] to trap them in immoral lifestyles, weaken the church, and slowly destroy society through the result of sinful living – disease' (:4). Nicholson does a careful comparison of tribal circumcision and Satanist rituals and notes the striking similarities which he claims are not coincidental (:3). He states that 'The ultimate test of the value of circumcision is not how widely accepted an ancient tradition it is, but the fruit of its initiates' (:6). He is aware that many churches have tried to offer a more Christianized

version of the circumcision rite. It seems this lacks recognition in the wider Xhosa community and hence many churches still follow the traditional form with its secret teaching about malehood and sexuality and sacrifice to and entreaty of the ancestors. Nicholson's research and tentative conclusions about the effect of Xhosa male circumcision on the circumcised and Xhosa society as a whole are radical and would draw vehement, widespread repudiation among Xhosa males in particular. Nevertheless, the writer's own experience of Xhosa males and their sexuality have caused him to ponder Nicholson's paper very carefully. If there is some truth in his conclusion then this is another example of where an aspect of the culture that has passed on a negative legacy. Some of the African continent's problems that are dealt with below will now be seen in a new light. The writer appreciates the sociological value of a rite of passage to adulthood recognition. Therefore it is not the circumcision operation and bravery that are the real concern (though many would query the value of stoically enduring such pain and possibly fatal infection), but the accompanying teaching and rituals and other implications of the rite. The writer understands that a Christian non-secretive version of the custom as far as women are concerned is possible, except that it appears that it is not recognized by the wider Xhosa community. However, a Christian version of the circumcision rite means African Christians are embracing a central custom of the amaXhosa and thus their African identity is not unduly tampered with and their influence in Xhosa society is not cut off through being treated as a boy which would be the case if not circumcised.

Malawi-born theologian Phiri (cited in Siemon-Netto 2002) sees witchcraft as the 'very force that is keeping our continent down.' This is not surprising in the light of verses like Leviticus 20:6: 'I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists'. The writer tries to lead his black students to accept that the cost of ATR is too great in the twenty-first century. However, he stresses that this will never require them to reject their black identity.

The stress on community and human relationships in Africa is a wonderful feature of African culture. Kretzschmar (1995d:51) observes that the Western approach to life is task-centred unlike Africa's relationship-centred approach. Clearly this is another area where ATR is restrictive in the modern world of economic competition with its high standards, pressure and deadlines, all necessary to bring down the high rate of unemployment in Africa.

The writer was given a leaflet in Port Elizabeth advertising the traditional doctor Kayizzi's services in the central business district. There were two sub-headings: 'Come and speak with your forefathers' and 'Come and learn what to do to get pleased with your ancestors.' Then follows a long list of ailments and conditions that the healer claims to be able to cure, no doubt through the help of the ancestors. Some of the items are curing bad luck and

misfortune; bringing back a lost lover; making your lover crazy about you; getting a promotion; getting a job; stopping alcoholism; attracting people to one's business; chase somebody away; passing exams. Clearly all these problems have normal, non-spiritual means of solving involving effort, the use of the mind, intentions, decisions and planning, to name just a few. To follow the ATR route undercuts accountability for problems partly or totally one's own fault and prevents acquiring the important ability to solve problems. Clearly Kayizzi's services undermine the prospect of greater personal and community accountability and development.

It has been noted that the communalistic feature of ATR means the 'focus and orientation is not towards the individual at all' (Pato 2000:94). The African 'has neither private faith nor private spirituality. Their faith and their spirituality is communal' (:95). Personal development and initiative and independent drive, so important in the modern world, does not harmonize with this background. The extension of the community to include the more important ancestors tends to entrench uniformity with the past, which generally is not up to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Above it was noted that many liberation leaders in Africa have been a key cause of the present poor state of Africa. Gumede (2009:16) states that 'the cult of the leader [which encourages uncritical deference to the leader] often incorporates the view that because he 'delivered' the people from bondage into freedom, he is entitled to stay in power', even when that power is detrimental to the progress of the people. Clearly this approach to the leader 'also undermines the emergence and consideration of alternative ideas, policies and innovations' (:17) and the role of the intellectual (see below), which are so necessary to produce a healthy and successful nation. Discouraging or punishing vibrant criticism removes 'one of the checks and balances in the system of government' that help keep the government accountable (:21) and prevents citizens exercising a more effective role in the democratic process and the setting of the agenda of the government (:22). 'The truth is that very few liberation movements set much store by building strong, independent and democratic institutions' (:28). Here is another example of how a cultural trait, respect for the leader(s), has been damaging to Africa.

It has been thoroughly demonstrated that there is a cultural legacy in Africa that has curtailed significant development and needs an overhaul. If the evangelical churches in Africa effectively disciple their converts in the Gospel this legacy could be overcome.

## **5.2 Facing the present**

The writer challenged his students to not only reflect honestly on the past in order to discern its negative legacies so that strategic and effective interventions could be made. The negative

bequeathments needed attention and correction. Also, current mistakes being made that hold back societal development need to be solved. It is no good continuing in a course of action that is detrimental to the people. Africa is not famous for dealing promptly with systemic problems. It tends to look on rather helplessly blaming others and waiting for help. The tools for bravely facing the present are diagnosis, prescription and effective application of the remedy. What are the problems facing Africa at the present time?

#### 5.2.1 The problem of blaming the West

The writer while at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape taught against always blaming the West for Africa's poverty, lack of growth and other problems. Benn (2002:14) notes that various institutions that have been blamed for the spread of HIV and AIDS in Africa: e.g. 'the CIA invented HIV to destroy Africa'; 'ruthless companies producing vaccines that kill people.' An example of the latter was 'the recent theory linking the origin of AIDS to careless polio vaccine campaigns in DR Congo in the 1950s and 60s' (:14). A recent example is President Mugabe's lambasting of the West for causing the cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe. His vocal and controversial tirades against the West, especially the United Kingdom, are a smokescreen that hide his government's incompetence and callousness. Ban Ki-Moon, United Nations Secretary-General (cited by Lauria 2008), captures the disastrous results of Mugabe's tenure in the presidency: 'The current cholera epidemic is only the most visible manifestation of a profound multi-sectoral crisis, encompassing food, agriculture, education, health, water, sanitation and HIV/AIDS.' Van Rooy (cited in Tshilenga :129) criticizes the African for the fruitless practice of always blaming the past and others for the state of Africa:

On the one hand magic [include the ancestral cult] all too often furnishes an excuse for failure. Instead of examining one's methods of working, planning, marketing techniques, principals of production, or perseverance, in case of failure, it is very easy to look and find a scapegoat in the person of someone practicing black magic against one. This not only leads to endless animosity and jealousy, but it also robs one of the opportunity to face reality and profit from a realistic assessment of one's mistakes.

The writer feels it is appropriate to remind Africans that their past consisted not only of resistance to colonialism and the missionaries, but also negotiation from the African side. Though the dialectical process was not an equal one in many respects, it was 'nevertheless a more intricate, contested and mutual process than has usually been recognized' (Draper 2003:xii). Certain African chiefs were not above co-operating with the slave trade for what they could gain from it, e.g. guns to make them more powerful. The life of the Xhosa Chief Kama after his conversion is an example of co-operation with the colonial authorities. He was 'rewarded with land' and other benefits for acceding to benefits to the whites (Millard

2000:146). Africa needs to take some of the blame for succumbing to Western cultural imperialism. Africa needs to resist the tradition of making the West ‘a permanent alibi, a scapegoat that carries all the sins of the past four centuries and will carry it as long as Africa remains dependent and subjugated’ (Mana cited in Snyman 2008:107). A small number of African writers have attributed at least part of the blame for Africa’s woes to ‘within [Africa] and criticized the facile use of foreign cultural intrusions as scapegoats, particularly when that practice distracted from ... a need of internal reform’ (Hale 2007:46). Another blotch on Africa’s record is the little to show for the over 500 billion dollars from the West sunk into Africa (Meredith 2006:683). As a result there is a perception that development in Africa ‘was never really on the agenda in the first place’ (Ake cited in Meredith 2006:688).

The writer found his black students experienced difficulty breaking out of the blaming mould. Black South African society is riddled with the black victim mentality. Such a mentality stifles black development and can be a smokescreen that hides racism, incompetency and other immoral tendencies. A recent example has been the Eskom board’s handling of their CEO Maroga’s poor management and leadership of Eskom. ‘The issue was quickly politicized as the ANC Youth League and Black Management Forum cried racism’ (Davie 2009a:30). It is painful for Africans to accept significant responsibility for Africa’s condition. This pain is aggravated to unbearable intensity by the seeming impossibility of closing the development gap between Africa and the West. But blaming the West will keep Africa trapped in underdevelopment.

The writer believes that the story of South Korea is most informative and relevant for Africa. The following information was sourced from the article *Korea under Japanese Rule* ([Online]). Korea was colonized for many decades by Japan and the colonial conditions were similar to those in Africa, including the attempt to turn the Koreans into a serf race of servants of the Japanese. The colonial government invested heavily in industry and in infrastructure, including schools, railroads, port and utilities, as in Africa. Most of these physical facilities remained in Korea after the Liberation, as in Africa. The Japanese government created a system of [colonial mercantilism](#) which extracted and exploited resources such as timber, rice, fish, coal and iron-ore for the economic benefit of the mother country. Here again we have echoes of African colonialism. The colonial government suppressed Korean culture and language in an effort remove all elements of Korean culture from society. All classes were taught in Japanese and students were academically penalized for using the Korean language during school hours. Eventually the Korean language was not permitted to be used in all schools and businesses. Here we have more extreme examples of



imperialism than in Africa. Most Korean companies were founded well after the end of the Japanese occupation, unlike in liberated Africa. The Korean War (1950-1953) left the peninsula destroyed and *the economy on a level with the poorer countries of Africa*. Africa needs to take note here. McNamara (1990) argues that the origin of South Korea's phenomenal growth in capitalistic enterprises can be traced to indigenous capitalism during its colonial period under Japanese rule in spite of the restraints placed by the Japanese on the Korean entrepreneurs. How Africa needs to hear this story. Greenspan (2008:311) gives the reasons for the meteoric economic rise of the East Asian 'Tigers' after the devastation of World War II and the Korean and Vietnamese wars: 'Their model is simple and effective. The developing nation opens up part or all of its economy to foreign investment to employ a low-wage, but often educated, workforce ... Critical to this model is that investors receive assurances that, if successful, they will be able to reap the rewards.' Greenspan (:313) also notes that they became exporters to international markets through 'productivity-enhancing technologies (borrowed from developed countries).' The Korean story (and the other Asian Tigers' stories) should not only be an inspiration to African countries, but put a stop to blaming the colonialists for all of Africa's poor development.

#### 5.2.2 Problems in education

On South Africa 'Outcomes-based education (OBE) was introduced as an educational panacea' which it has proved not to be (Allais 2008:26). The new system challenged the country's teachers, including the 'highly skilled and dedicated teachers' (:26). Allais (:26) says that OBE 'has damaged our already weak education system. Instead of solving the problems that it caused, we are simply adding layers of complexity.' Further, 'Teachers are not given resources to deal with children of this century [influenced by violence and bad values]' (Mxesi 2008:2). Hindle (2008:26), Director General of Education, notes that many teachers 'had deep inadequacies', were not 'inherently driven to hard work' [cultural problem?], showed a 'lack of commitment to the task', and worked in conditions 'wholly inadequate'. Local seminars for providing much-needed training of teachers in OBE have often lacked competent facilitators and enthusiastic teacher-support (because of the writer's interest in education he has had much contact with educationalists in the Nelson Mandela Bay, who, together with different educational journals and newspapers he reads, have provided this information). If black education wasn't working in the old system, why was it thought it would suddenly flourish in any other system, including OBE? Surely the new government was not entirely blind to the nature of the fault lines in black education: the high number of teachers who lacked efficiency, responsibility, commitment, dedication, vision,

competency, planning, loyalty, and adequate training; inadequate home support of the children's education; and poor educational facilities (e.g. more than 600 mud schools in the Eastern Cape and over-crowded classrooms, Gower 2009:2). These issues that bedeviled black education in the apartheid years should have been dealt with first before there was ever any thinking about introducing another system of education. The proof that these problems have continued is witnessed by the fact that South Africa 'produces some of the lowest scores in literacy, numeracy, maths and science, compared with even poorer countries in our region' and tolerates 'dysfunctional schools' (Dommissie 2009a:15). 'Only about 15% of Grade 12 students pass well enough to enter university' (Jansen 2008:180). In 2009, 19% qualified for tertiary studies. If this is not bad enough, all South African universities experience a high drop-out rate among their undergraduate students (:184), the cost of which is incalculable to students, the institutions and the country (:185). Jansen (:182), a leading educationalist, notes that 'the standard of teaching is very poor and the achievements in learning are very dismal.' The Grade 12 results for 2009 indicate a regression in learning in most provinces. The poor state of education in the Eastern Cape, especially in the rural areas, is evidenced by the thousands of school learners who have migrated to better government schools in Kwazulu-Natal, Western Cape and even the Free State (Gower 2009:2). Informal boarding houses have sprung up and there are often as many as fifty children in a house (:3). Needless to say, because of lack of parental supervision some teenagers engage in prostitution, dagga smoking, drug peddling, parties and alcohol consumption (:3).

Why, therefore, did the ANC majority government tinker with white schools and their curricula (both were functioning extremely well), thereby unnecessarily upsetting a stable, productive system, instead of spending a number of years bringing the standard of black education up to the level of white education – with the proviso that black learners could be allowed into whites schools (cf model C schools) if they could manage academically. The astronomical sum of money (multi-billion rands) spent on OBE research and implementation (including new textbooks) could have been spent on renovating and building new black schools, improving facilities, and paying for accessible and further training of inadequately qualified teachers. Sadly and tragically the top white teachers and administrators were encouraged to take early retirement which left a huge gap in the pool of experienced and competent teachers. Is it too late to learn from the largely failed, misguided educational experiment and successfully make amends? The writer believes it is not too late if the mistakes of naivety, pride, inexperience and unwise decisions of the politicians are acknowledged and learnt from. But the damage and ground to make up are enormous –

sixteen years have been essentially lost. Greenspan (2008:505) reminds us that 'our advancement will depend on additions to the vast heritage of human knowledge accumulated over the generations.' The education system in South Africa is therefore faced with a mammoth challenge which it must meet if Africa is to become first world. This can be seen especially from the high number of 18-24-year-olds that are neither employed nor in education or training, namely 2.8 million (Minister of Higher Education, Nzimande, cited in Fransman 2009).

Another major criticism that can be leveled against the post-apartheid educational system is the matter of language medium of instruction. Education in one's mother tongue understandably affords the best pathway in education. It alone assures proper understanding of every subject taught. Black children start out being educated in their mother tongue for a few years and then are switched over into English as the medium of instruction. Black teachers and parents are often not competent in English and teachers therefore resort during class sessions to explaining in the mother tongue, which is also for the sake of the learners. This ensures the learners never master English sufficiently to make proper progress in the subjects as the textbooks are in English and all the tests, assignments and examinations are written in English. Black children placed in English medium (the old model C) preschools before attending English medium primary schools are not much better off as they never catch up fully with English language comprehension, speaking and writing. They too are disadvantaged all through their schooling. This is especially so if English is not spoken outside the classroom and at home. The argument is voiced that school education in English prepares the learners for higher education which is in English. There is only some truth in this view. The greatest weakness is that the material of the subjects are never fully grasped, especially in the early years thus preventing a solid early educational foundation; further, examination writing speed is affected because of a lack of both English proficiency and lack of a good understanding of the subject and examination questions (not an IQ fault).

The writer believes that if the entire schooling programme is taught in the mother tongue of the black and white children and English taken as a second language throughout the twelve years of schooling, the matriculant's understanding of the subjects would be far better and it would take just one year at tertiary level to be sufficiently competent in English. Better to approach tertiary education with a language challenge than an inadequate or poor knowledge of the subjects taught at school. Many white English-speaking children educated in English with Afrikaans as a second language have found this to be so when conducting their tertiary education at an Afrikaans institution. Clearly one of the reasons for such great failure in South

African education is the absence of mother tongue instruction throughout the children's schooling. Again, if OBE had not been introduced there would have been money for mother tongue education, at least in some of the black languages. Translation and printing of existing textbooks would have been no more costly than rewriting and printing all the textbooks for OBE. The experience of the Afrikaners in developing their language for academic use is a precedent that produced excellent educational results from preschool to university. Pretorius (2009:25) makes a powerful statement when she says that 'a child taught well in any language is better off than a child taught badly in his or her mother-tongue. ... What is best for children is good teaching – in any language.' Clearly the political leadership of the ANC has failed South Africa's most needy learners at a time in world history when a good education is all-important.

Education is further challenged by HIV/AIDS, poverty and births out of wedlock or those unplanned. 'In many homes children head the household, single parents struggle, teenagers who are children themselves, become parents and grandmothers are left to support grandchildren and even children-headed households' (Dommissie 2009a:15). HIV-positive learners' education suffers as they are frequently sick and miss school. The orphans generally cannot concentrate in class due to their often needy and sad circumstances. Clearly the negative impact of HIV/AIDS on the education of South Africa's children is enormous, especially when one notes that by 2015 there will be 5 700 000 AIDS orphans (Timse 2009) the majority of whom will not get adequate rearing, love and educational support. Their situation is made worse by the shortage of social workers. Needless to say the economic and social consequences of increasing orphan numbers will soon present a major crisis. (Timse 2009.)

The theme that runs through all Africa's pressing and disturbing problems is a lack of morality – the underlying cause of failures in both old and new South African educational systems. And this problem starts in the home. As American president Obama states: 'All the money in the world won't boost student achievement if parents make no effort to instil in their children values of hard work and delayed gratification' (cited in Dommissie 2009a:15). The writer keeps being forced to confront himself and his students with the question, "If the Church in South Africa from the beginning had disciplined its converts properly, and Christian parents had trained their children according to biblical principles, would the country be facing such formidable problems in education today?" The writer impresses this question on his students' minds, not to burden them with guilt, but with hope that flows from true diagnosis of the problem and its cause and a sure solution to the problem.

### 5.2.3 Problem of laziness

Tshilenga (2005:107) notes a result of African solidarity: 'Africans prefer to be with the members of their family, rather than be busy at work. Between a task and a relationship, the latter is preferred.' The amaXhosa are happiest when nearest to nature following a slow tempo of life and when socializing – they are sociable to the point that they will 'never pass each other without a chat' (Elliott 1970:41,45). The writer has witnessed the truth of this in his work. He encountered casual, relaxed, ill-disciplined and lazy black students at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape, even after patient efforts at seeking to help them remedy the situation. They have told the writer that in the townships it is no shame to be out of work. But more seriously, he has been informed that many of the unemployed don't look seriously or at all for work, including some of the writer's students who need part-time work – apparently they don't want to work – and seek or demand food usually from a granny or other helpless or weaker family member. The many little shops in the Walmer Township in Port Elizabeth are owned by black foreigners. On enquiry about the reason for this situation from a student who lives there, the writer was informed that they were more hard-working, efficient, resourceful and dependable than local blacks. Jealousy would partly account for the recent xenophobic attacks against black foreigners. The writer has often thought that if local blacks worked harder than black foreigners, the latter would not be competitors. The writer is not unaware that foreigners desperate for money will work for less than the job is worth. But he has been informed that foreign blacks are generally harder and better workers. The writer's second eldest daughter worked at Baragwaneth Hospital until recently. The work ethic of the non- and semi-professional black staff working in her department shocked her. There was no sense of responsibility, no dedication to the job, no compassion for the sick; there were daily illegal absences during official times of work, and the pace of work was pathetically slow and lethargic; and any attempted correction was resisted with indignation, shock, rage, denials, excuses, outbursts of tears, and claims of lies and racism. The writer heard from a black educator, whose work takes him in the course of his duties to over forty-five black schools for educational assistance to the teachers. He told the writer that he can't wait to get out of education. The reasons covered the teachers' general lack of interest in and dedication to their career. On arrival at the schools he is greeted with a group or groups of teachers chatting in the staffroom who should be in class teaching. His reply to why the principals allow this dereliction of duty was that the loafers are friends of the principal. The Bible Institute Eastern Cape has plenty ground for extensive vegetable growing, even on a commercial basis. The writer tried every possible encouragement to needy students to take up this opportunity which

would enable them to provide food for their families and have vegetables over for sale to the faculty and students, but with almost zero success. From what the writer has been told and from what he reads in the media, intentions of stamping out laziness and poor work in government departments usually vaporizes when met with threats of violence if carried out. Venter (1997:295) states that the rulers and masses of South Africa must face the truth that ‘There is no way around it: South Africa’s survival depends on its ability to grow its economy.’ And this means hard work. One cannot but be struck when reading accounts of the early settlers in Africa by how hard they worked to make the land productive and suitable for happy, comfortable and aesthetic living. They never encountered such labour and achievements by the resident Africans.

Discipleship of Christian converts in Africa clearly needs to include grounding in a theology of work lived out by those providing discipleship training. Christians are to work hard, responsibly, faithfully, willingly, in any work situation as if serving Christ so that they can cater for their own needs and have something over to help those in genuine need. The writer is aware of the high rate of unemployment in South Africa and the rest of Africa. This was brought home recently when thousands of applicants gathered in Durban to apply for two hundred learnerships with the metro police. However, he is of the opinion that *looking for* or *trying to create work eight hours per day* is fulfilling the biblical injunction to work six days a week, and should lead to a job, however humble the job and limited the remuneration. The latter kind of employment can function as a stepping stone to better employment. The writer stresses the Apostle Paul’s injunction that Christians who won’t work – even in a low paid job when no better paid one is available – must not be supported by others. The only exception is where the unemployed person is working eight hours, six days a week searching for work and trying to create a job, and if some of the time is taken up with skills-training in order to improve the chances of employment or better employment or job creation. The Institute’s new training program, referred to above, will present the importance and value of work in God’s eyes in order to provide a theological basis and motivation for hard work (see Sherman and Hendricks 1987). Once arduous work brings flourishing results, this will ‘lessen Africa society’s preoccupation with wizardry’ (Daneel 1990:231), which has been shown to be detrimental to development.

Clearly discipleship in Africa must deal with the theology of hard work.

#### 5.2.4 Problems in development

It has been noted that ATR societies do not match the development in the West because of ATR’s worldview. The writer discussed this with his students to encourage them to see the

limiting impact of the African worldview on development (see Chapter 3). This is why Farred (2009:81) asks the question, 'What good is an African Renaissance if it has no epistemological purchase outside itself.' He points out how Christianity's worldview and Gospel fulfil human and societies' need for greater efficiency, development and production (see below). The Institute's new programme when launched will include a theology of development. This programme will present the importance and value of development in God's eyes and provide a powerful theological basis and motivation for development in Africa (see Sherman and Hendricks 1987). Evangelical Christians believe that the Bible teaches that every community has by fiat of creation been given divine creative capacity and a command, no matter what the past and present circumstances, to develop its economy into a self-sustaining, growing one. The writer appreciates how difficult it is for African Christians in their context to believe the creation ordinance and act on it with relentless confidence. One's understanding of the extent of the effect of the Fall on the image of God in humans, will determine how strongly one believes this creative potency to be. The writer impressed on his students the Apostle Paul's pastoral strategy: clear doctrinal understanding is important for successful Christian living. The importance of this for discipleship of converts is evident.

Max Weber offered an explanation for the evolvement of capitalism. According to him Protestantism, especially Calvinism, led to people engaging in work in the 'secular' world as a religious calling, making work a virtue, something intrinsically good. Work was measured by how much glory it brought to God and how much service it rendered to others. This understanding of one's job or career led to hard work, planning, self-denial, developing enterprises, engaging in trade, saving and accumulation of wealth. So Weber concluded that the Protestant ethic influenced the development of capitalism. This is the Weber thesis. (Max Weber [Online]; see also Chester 2006:81-82.) Once, therefore, it is believed that one serves God through one's work/job/career and will be materially blessed, a new meaning of and impetus for hard work results. Later the Protestant approach was supplemented with a secular culture that encouraged wealth as an end in itself and indicator of personal success. This all led to prosperity in the new world and Europe. 'It is then not surprising that the missionaries saw their culture as superior!' (Williams 2008:6'). African evangelical leaders need to note that Western wealth had its Christian roots in a theology of hard work and development and bring it into their discipleship program. Sadly capitalism has displayed a dark side due to the sinful nature, causing many to dispute its desirability and morality, which has led to the ideologies of socialism and communism more in keeping with traditional societies. As Cronin (2009:101), a communist, claims, 'Capitalist wealth is always the result of the intensified

exploitation of millions of working people.’ The potential for huge profit in capitalism has broadened the capitalist’s search for cheaper labour and more markets worldwide, which has threatened or weakened entrepreneurialism in the non-capitalistic and less developed or undeveloped countries, and has led to economic imperialism by first-world countries. Christians should be disciplined to avoid the abuses of capitalism. They should use capitalism to stimulate and foster the economic development of the poor. Where Christians have endorsed and practiced an abusive, unloving form of capitalism, this is sin and therefore is not to be viewed as inherent to and a result of Christianity.

The writer showed his black students how property ownership and free trade have brought significant wealth where it has been practised in contrast to socialism/communism. Greenspan (2008:130,132) notes that the fall of the Berlin Wall exposed the economic decay and ruin of communist East Germany – ‘so devastating that it astonished even the skeptics.’ It ‘had little more than one-third the productivity of its western counterparts ... The same applied to the population’s standard of living’ (:132). Collective ownership ‘has failed time and time again to produce a civil and prosperous society’ (:503). The writer’s black students found it easy to latch onto the criticism that capitalism is materialistic: ‘competitive markets [are] ... subject to excessive manipulation by advertizers and marketers who trivialize life by promoting superficial and ephemeral values’ (:141). But the verdict ‘on central planning has been rendered, and it is unequivocally negative’ (:141). Capitalism rewards hard work and initiative. The writer stressed to his students that though capitalism panders to materialism it is the best option for Africa as Onyeani (2005) strongly maintains (see below). The evangelical churches should be able to resist the covetousness that capitalism can ferment due to Satan and the sinful nature by finding fulfilment and not their identity in their work and being generous to those in genuine need through aid, but more specifically job creation.

The writer sought in a non-paternalistic manner to dialogue with his black students about the causes and solutions of Africa’s development problems. The urgent need for a proper diagnosis of and remedy for undevelopment and underdevelopment in African countries is because these countries are ‘now the last [in the development race], the ones who are suffering the most, being poorly developed and destitute’ (Tshilenga 2005:99). It is understandable that discussion of this topic was painful for the writer’s black students. They rightly focused on the pockets of success on the continent and attempted to avoid talking about the areas of failure or they blamed others for the poverty. But, as Onyeani (1990) argues, this ostrich’s head in the ground approach will continue to retard development in Africa. The writer reluctantly but respectfully told his students that if black Africa continued



to embrace all aspects of the African worldview and lifestyle they must not complain if African countries are poorer and less developed than first-world countries. This often forced a critical moment in their thinking in which they emerged from a nebulous world of economic ideas and untested beliefs and were rocketed into the harsh reality of modern economics where time-management, goal-setting, future planning, efficiency, quality control and profit are the rules for survival and success.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 'reports that entrepreneurship ventures in South Africa show a low growth level when compared to other emerging economies' (Louw 2008:306). Clearly for significant development to take place in Africa, many more entrepreneurs are required. It was noted above that Africans traditionally don't favour competition and certain people developing above the group. But if black entrepreneurs would share their wealth equally among employees and the wider community the problem would be solved. Sadly the sinful nature makes this kind of generosity rare (witness the growing personal wealth of the black elite).

#### 5.2.5 Problems of greed, crime and corruption

The human story according to evangelicals is marred because of sin. The African saga is no different. The colonial masters with their luxurious, pompous living were simply replaced by black clones – 'pillaging gangsters with an insatiable appetite for self-enrichment at the expense of the poor citizens' (Dickson 2009). Greed, crime, bribery and corruption are the cancers of African society – 'the national game' (Dickson 2009) – threatening to strangle all hope of advancement if not drastically curbed. President Zuma has established an interministerial committee 'to formulate new strategies on how the government can effectively deal with the rampant scourge of corruption' – 'the pilfering of state coffers has spiralled out of control' (Zuma's first step to fight corruption 2009). The government is 'compelled to rebuild 40 000 defective low-cost RDP houses built by greedy contractors, some of whom have become instant millionaires' (this figure does not mention the numbers that will need fixing); even the country-wide school feeding schemes were milked (Zuma's first step to fight corruption 2009). The writer reminded his black students that these sins are no respecter of persons, races, ideologies, and social, political and economic systems. They breed a non-development mentality and therefore are part of Africa's dire economic problems. Dickson (2009 makes the point: 'South Africa may not be near the horrifying experiences of corruption in Africa ... but if we do not succeed in strengthening our anti-corruption measures and nip this scourge in the bud now, corruption and fraud within government [and society] could be the beginning of our end.'

One of the greatest challenges in South Africa is crime. This is probably one of the major causes of emigration of white and also black South Africans. As Haffajee (2008:14) states, 'Crime is propelling skilled South Africans of all colours out of our country.' Msimang (2009:21) describes the merciless murder of one of her wonderful black colleagues: 'In a dark and litter-strewn street in Zonkesizwe, he lay dying on Friday night, shot by a man who had calmly pulled the trigger and got back into his car and drove away as if he had just stopped to ask directions.' The day this man died his wife was mugged – 'they took her bag, her phone, the usual.' Msimang tells of her maid and baby two days before the murder 'being held up at gunpoint' and being told, "Give me your cellphone or I will kill you." A few months before Msimang's baby and her maid had faced the same trauma. She rightly asks, "What has happened to us?" She puts the blame partly with a government and ANC leadership who angrily brush aside criticism of their failures and choose 'to attack rather than to discuss.' 'Our leaders are no longer measured and nuanced, no longer exemplary.' She has 'lost faith in the current leadership'. The paucity of quality leaders in Africa is tackled below.

Holtmann (2008:168) claims that 'Over the past ten years South Africa has recorded an approximate 2 million serious crimes each year.' Rakoczy (2000:85) mentions the 'chilling statistic that a woman is raped every 25 seconds in this country [South Africa]' and that this incidence of rape is 'the highest in the world' (see the above discussion on the Xhosa circumcision rite). Holtmann (2008:169) notes that crime in South Africa 'is believed to be significantly under-recorded because of low levels of trust in the system [police and courts].' He (:169-170) states that 'recidivism (repeat offending) occurs at a rate estimated to be between 75% and 90% ...' A further indication of the high crime statistics in South Africa is the fact that South Africans collectively spend 'over R46 billion a year' on private security (:168). Sadly, 'Those who cannot afford private security suffer continuous vulnerability to victimisation that threatens their livelihood and their ability to uplift themselves from poverty' (:168). It has also been noted that private security measures do 'not reduce crime. At best, they displace it either to a different kind of crime or to another place' (:168). Further, 'Another disturbing trend is that of university students turning to crime. ... [because] crime has become 'fashionable' (Chang 2008a:220).

The question needs again to be asked as to why the Christian Church in Africa has not led to far lower crime and corruption statistics. Surely the Church should feel the urge and need to go back to the drawing board, and discipleship should be top of the agenda.

#### 5.2.6 Problems of alcohol and other drug abuse

Though alcohol and drug abuse have affected all levels of African society, especially in the cities, it is amongst the youth that the problems are most acute and disturbing. One of the writer's black students from Butterworth informed him that if the young people in this town (his home town) carried on in their present behaviour of alcohol and drug abuse, failing at and dropping out of school, spreading HIV, robbery, rape, orgies, violent crimes, loafing, they would soon all be dead. Dozens of learners from his school days have already faced their demise. Drug abuse and addiction are incubators of anti-society and other destructive behaviours. Once again the finger needs to be pointed at the absence of moral fibre in the nations of Africa. The writer's students had no problem acknowledging the corrupt moral condition of the nation. Nevertheless, it had shocked them; especially the government's failure to come up with an effective moral strategy to counter the gross immorality. The writer spent time discussing the need for a Moral Reformation as well as an African Renaissance. Much discussion with the students was centred on the Christian family where the spiritual foundation to ensure moral adulthood is to be laid and clearly is not generally the case. The writer emphasized to his students that the church has largely failed to produce families where children are reared to respect parents, teachers and others in legitimate authority over them, and live orderly, healthy, and non-rebellious lives. The problem can be traced right back to inadequate discipleship of converts, both parents and children.

#### 5.2.7 Problem of HIV/AIDS

The writer noted from his interactions with his black students that every student's family, church and neighbourhood had been infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Timse (2009) notes that The South African Institute of Race Relations 'estimates that 5 700 000 – or 32% of all children in South Africa – will have lost one or both parents due to HIV/AIDS by 2015.' In the Eastern Province where the writer works there are about 224 people infected and 126 deaths per day; and in Masakhane Primary in KwaZakhele about 50% of the 387 pupils are HIV/AIDS orphans and 15% of the learners from five to eight years of age are HIV-positive (Timse 2009). This situation made the writer's students reluctant to discover their status through testing because of fear that they might be HIV-positive, pointing almost certainly to promiscuity before conversion. The writer has been informed that there is a derogatory name for a Xhosa male who does not have multiple sexual female partners concurrently. Tshelane (2000:148) states that many AICs teach against sex outside of marriage, 'but it is being defied simply because of what sex is'. There is no comment that the reason is due to unspirituality. As noted above, this practice is the reason for the pandemic of HIV in Africa. The writer found that with rare exceptions none of the black churches his students attended or conducted

sex education or HIV/AIDS education or a biblical pastoral ministry to HIV/AIDS sufferers. The writer prompted his students to think statistically in order to grasp the gigantic scale of the pandemic and the multi-millions of people in Africa who will still suffer and die of AIDS in the coming decades. Registered deaths in South Africa jumped from 573 000 in 2007 to 756 000 in 2008 (SA not winning Aids battle – Zuma, 2009). In this article President Zuma is quoted as saying in his speech to the National Council of Provinces that ‘At this rate, there is a real danger that the number of deaths will soon overtake the number of births.’ Almost half of all deaths in 2008 were HIV/AIDS related (Herald Correspondent 2009). Discipleship in evangelical churches needs to prepare all new converts for this dark future. This is essential not only to help bring down the rate of HIV infection through the converts’ personal morality, but to better equip converts to seize the opportunity for HIV/AIDS education and evangelism (people with a death sentence are more open to the Gospel and make the best evangelists) and showing loving pastoral care. The church has an amazing chance to demonstrate and prove that the Gospel has all the answers to the pandemic: it has the moral power to ensure there is no spread of the virus; and it has the grace and love to accept those with HIV/AIDS, overcome the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, and care for HIV/AIDS sufferers (including through adopting children orphaned through parents dying of AIDS). Such a biblical approach within the membership of the churches, will display the Gospel in all its attractive beauty and could lead to widespread evangelical revivals which in turn would fuel a Moral Reformation in Africa.

Tragically Africa’s fight against HIV is dismal: ‘Africa is a giant, in-your-face failure for the HIV-prevention industry’ (Pisani cited in Dommissie 2009:11). Dasoo (2008:153) describes the situation as follows: ‘So, with all the abstaining, faithfulness and condomising, with all the HIV/AIDS projects among the most vulnerable, with all the philanthropic hand-ringing and political puffery, with the grand coalitions of the good and the great, we have little or nothing to show for it.’ Dasoo (:155) notes that the problem in anti-retroviral treatment is poor logistics. All that is needed is the hiring of ‘project managers who can deliver the project in the right way, at the right price, on time’ (:155).

Clearly Africa, especially South Africa, has lacked the political, civic and church leadership to tackle the HIV/AIDS scourge successfully. Dasoo (2008:153) suggests this when he writes that the denialist sophistry during Thabo Mbeki’s reign may have been ‘just an excuse for politicians to practice neglect.’

Again, would there be the HIV/AIDS scenario if Africa’s millions of Christians were disciplined in the faith and thoroughly equipped to be salt and light in the world?

#### 5.2.8 The problem of cultural and racial tensions

Racial tensions are anything but a thing of the past in South Africa. Even in the second generation of whites in the new South Africa there is 'dramatic evidence of white racism sprouting' (Jansen 2008:188). Similarly, there are angry black young people, mainly politically aligned, who threaten political enemies in their discourse (:189). The writer believes that Christians in Africa need a theology of culture-ethnicity, which Chapter 5 provides. Christians grounded in this understanding of culture/ethnicity/identity will be able to resolve racial and cultural barriers, and in the process be humanly, spiritually and socially enriched. The writer worked hard at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape to achieve multi-racial and multi-cultural unity within diversity. His own experience proved this is possible and desirable as should be expected since it is New Testament calls for this. Further, as shown in Chapter 5, cultural respect is essential if the church is not to be an obstacle to non-Christians being drawn to Christ and if it is to progress toward fuller maturity. Finally it can be noted that racialism in the work-place and society at large keeps black and white from fusing their efforts, skills, time and talents for the good of the nation. White and black are needed in a dynamic partnership in Africa, but racism hinders this recognition and achievement. Once again, Christians in Africa must take much of the blame for poor race relations as the Gospel properly lived out overcomes racial-cultural barriers and conflict.

#### 5.2.9 Problems in the economy

Onyeani, a Nigerian, wrote a highly controversial book (1990). His thesis is that Africans are consumers and not producers. His book was understandably not well received by black South Africans. His evidence, though painful to accept, is not easy to dismiss. He also claims that the black race has the destructive bad habit of always blaming others for its woes, as noted above. He argues that it depends on other nations for its food, clothing, weapons, etc, and that Africans have become economic slaves with a victim mentality. He calls for blacks to change this trend and become capitalists who exploit their human and continent's potential to bring widespread wealth to the African continent. The book is deliberately provocatively written in order to shock the black race into honest self-analysis and into becoming capitalists in order to become prosperous and independent. Onyeani (2005) was interviewed on his book by the Mail&Guardian. The following extracts from the interview give an idea of Onyeani's analysis of the black race:

The blacks are 'always blaming colonialists or slavery for the black person's problems. I am not saying we should not recognise the impact of colonialism.

But we should say that it has been 45 years since Africa was decolonised. It is time we said that what happens in Africa today, we are responsible for it.

We need to learn to take care of ourselves. Indians wear saris made in India, they drive cars made in India, and [the] Chinese are not afraid to use products made in their country.

We must do the same.

I met a man who says he is from a village somewhere here [South Africa]. He told me that the people in his village have lost all their stores to the Pakistanis. Why is that? It is because we are not willing to put in the same amount of time. It is because the Pakistanis are willing to work hard; they are prepared to work 25 hours a day and eight days a week. Blacks are not willing to work hard. They think that once you have a shop, you have arrived.

People in Africa should not demand such high wages. The Indians don't mind working for peanuts, as long as it is for the good of their communities.

The reason we have so many people going to Europe looking for work is because we have not been able to provide jobs for our people.

If we talk about it [black people's laziness and inefficiency], perhaps we will stop doing it.

The writer's students smiled sheepishly when hearing an author like Onyeani writing in this vein, showing that the accusations have a ring of truth. If in Africa ruthless honesty like Onyeani is calling for is avoided (which seems to be generally the case), there will be no long term solution to Africa's economic crises.

Africa's population size does not permit a return to subsistence farming, even if all white-owned land was to be given to blacks. Also, the products of modern technology once tasted will not make it easy to return to traditional living off the land. Further, Zimbabwe has shown that the scarcity of arable land in Africa means commercial farming is needed to avoid an economic meltdown and shortages of food. This kind of farming requires advanced skills and machinery, and hence Africa cannot ignore or live without the West's technical know-how. Clearly the West's advanced scientific discoveries and technology need to be mastered and lead to more manufacturing in Africa. The only hope for Africa is to develop its economy and compete internationally. The writer pointed this out to his black students, and that developing

technology and the manufacturing industry in Africa meant developing the necessary technical skills. South Africa has attempted this through its skills levy and SETAs (sector education and training authorities), but with poor results. It would seem that the best system is vocational schools and colleges, not the Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, which are 'second-class status' institutions (Jansen 2008:185) and a legendary failure (:190). The pre-apartheid education and training would mean that industry could employ suitably qualified people instead of having to co-ordinate their training after employing them during working hours when they would not be productive. Both industry and government need to be equally focused on successful skills training. Greenspan (2008:505) notes that the USA is suffering a skills shortage because of its 'dysfunctional ... elementary and secondary education system has failed to prepare students sufficiently rapidly.' Clearly South Africa needs to upgrade its schooling system to ensure that it does not continue to suffer a shortage of skilled workers and continue to produce a surfeit of lesser-skilled workers (see below on unemployables). A good educational base and effective skills training are the only way to contract the wage gap between the skilled and the semi- and non-skilled workers (:505). Without a strong school system, as at present in South Africa, the result 'is millions of young people who are semi-literate and desperate' who 'trawl the streets of South Africa exhibiting high degrees of frustration' (Jansen 2008:185). Their low level of skills has 'very little exchange value in the marketplace' (:186). Thus until the education system is transformed, there will be far too many inadequately skilled people (including many with degrees) in South Africa for whom 'bounty ... is, in reality, light worlds away' (Haffajee 2008:18).

The political journalist Venter (1997) predicted two possible scenarios within about fifteen years after Mandela goes (he probably meant when his presidency ended). The first one involves a priority on economic growth because this must precede attempts to transform society through programmes of distribution and welfare; the money must be earned before one can spend it (:290). This would require the creation of an entrepreneurial class with world-class aspirations and the active co-operation of the unions (:290). The other scenario he foresaw was that the ANC would split with the right wing breaking away (:289). The ANC would become a socialist party of the poor and unemployed and would 'reduce South Africa to a state where wealth is distributed rather than created, where authoritarian government becomes an inevitability, and where regional and social conflict will ultimately result in a wasteland' (:289). One cannot but help think of African countries like Zimbabwe. What a terrible outcome this would be for South Africa! What an anticlimax to the mesmerizing

dream of a liberated South Africa being a beacon of hope for the rest of the African continent, and even the world.

Affirmative Action and BEE and BBBEE policies in South Africa have undoubtedly appeared necessary, and the writer has rejoiced at these developments where they have been successful. It would seem that the beneficiaries of the R280 billion spent on black economic empowerment since 1994 have been mostly black oligarchs well connected to the ANC leadership (Gumede 2009:25), especially Patrice Motsepe – investments worth R14-billion, Tokyo Sexwale – R1.1-billion, and Cyril Ramaphosa – R988-million (Davie 2009b:45). It is interesting that there has been ‘no serious effort to compel [them] to create jobs or make socially productive investments, given that BEE money is a politically sponsored ‘handout’ ’ (Gumede 2009:25). Understandably, many affirmative action employees, especially managers, have been out of their depth, leading to a drop in standards and profitability. Due to this situation and other factors (see above and below), businesses, the corporate world and the public have suffered great frustration. The writer spoke to a black painter while busy with a painting job for the writer. In the course of the conversation the writer asked the painter how things were going in his township. He replied that everything from policing, schooling, hospitals to other local service deliveries were worse than in the old South Africa. Even allowing for massive migration to the cities and the stress this has put on local services, it seems the problem is largely incompetency – often resulting from nepotism, cronyism, corruption, laziness and factionalism in the ANC. For example, ‘The system of political deployment put untrained, inexperienced people in charge of hospitals with disastrous consequences’ (Ramphela 2009). This is confirmed for instance by the fact that by the end of 2009 the Gauteng Health Department had failed ‘to pay suppliers R1.4-million worth of outstanding bills’ (Skade 2009). The negative knock-on effect of such incompetence through abuse of affirmative action and policies like BEE, to the wider economy is disastrous. The SABC’s audited financial statements showed ‘a loss of R910 million for the 2008/2009 financial year’ (Public broadcaster loses R910m, 2009). This can hardly all be blamed on apartheid. Some of the failures of affirmative action have been blamed on inadequate skills-training before and after affirmative appointments. But it seems that often where there is post-employment training or where the paper qualifications match the position, the disadvantaged background of blacks has not been eradicated. Of course there are exceptions where there was no disadvantaged upbringing. There is generally a significant gap in all round knowledge and academic and social skills, e.g. problem-solving skills, time management skills, speed of learning new skills, work-rate and language skills are lacking, which decreases efficiency,



competency and output. The unsuitability of many affirmative action employees is worsened by other problems discussed in Section 5 of this Chapter. The writer was daily confronted with this situation in his work at the Bible Institute. Jackson (2009) refers to research conducted by *Deloitte Best Company to Work For*, which shows that for job satisfaction employees need ‘to feel that they are adding value’ and ‘to be reassured that they have the skills and resources at their disposal to get their jobs done properly’, and these trumped ‘remuneration in every instance.’ These statistics demonstrate that affirmative action, except where the person was fully qualified or able to become fully qualified with appropriate training, sets blacks up for frustration, dissatisfaction and self-image damage thus perpetuating a feeling of inferiority birthed during the colonial-apartheid years, or worse still confirming (incorrectly) their inferiority. The writer fails to see restitution in this demoralizing and dangerous policy. It also will not benefit delivery and the economy but have the opposite effect.

L’Ange (2005:471) notes that privilege ‘never rests easy where the haves are grossly outnumbered by the have-nots, and when the disparity between them is huge.’ This situation exists in South Africa and threatens the country’s stability, a point Thabo Mbeki has frequently made. L’Ange (:471) rightly states that white South Africans ‘could find their greatest security in devising ways to improve the lot of the have-nots rather than simply welcoming the black haves into the ranks of the elite.’ The great challenge is to find the best way to achieve this (see below); and this requires a new calibre of political, trade union and business leaders (see below).

In South Africa there is a strong mindset of entitlement due primarily to the Bill of Rights. There is an increasingly vocal angry demand by the poor for houses, electricity, water and work. Snelgar (2006:11) captures the effects of entitlement:

This basic principle of human motivation, hard work, psychological and spiritual health has virtually been “educated” out of the South African mind and lifestyle. The employee who believes he has earned his salary simply by being present at work will become less and less productive, and morale will decline. The unemployed person believes that there is an entitlement to work, etc, and this in turn results in lack of motivation to seek or create work. People, who are led to believe in entitlement rather than fair exchange by permitting them to receive without contributing, are actually encouraged into a life of crime.

Striking for better remuneration is sometimes justified. But it also can flow from the entitlement mentality. The strikes for higher wages often have an ironic twist as many of the strikers do not even deserve their present wages. This belief in entitlement in South Africa has resulted mostly in response to the disadvantages suffered during the apartheid regime. The

Institute is committed to the belief that a good theological basis for an excellent work ethic will help Christians to counter the spirit of entitlement. Rights stemming from human dignity should not do away with human responsibilities, like working for one's living, and are not always possible on demand. If a claim of entitlement is not checked it will weaken and cripple the economy and lead to further poverty.

Payment of fair wages is crucial to economic stability and therefore to economic growth. This issue comes to the fore during strike season, which has the potential to derail the economy if not handled correctly. The writer believes that share-holders, business boards, business owners, top managers and government have not found the right way to communicate complex economics matters in simple understandable language and terms to ALL employees (skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled). Wage negotiations are plagued by union members not fully understanding how new wage structures are derived, resulting in mistrust and unreasonable wage demands. The writer entered this discourse with some of his black students and found how important it is to explain to them the basics of modern economics, capitalism versus socialism, wealth creation, the importance of profit as a motivating factor for further development and job creation, and especially how government gets its money. Only once these issues are better grasped by the masses – and this takes time and patience, will wage negotiations proceed speedily without the need of industrial strike action so damaging to the economy and foreign investment. The writer even believes painstakingly pouring over simplified monthly income and expenditure lists with employees would be helpful; this would also put a break on unfair sharing of the profits. The brave step by business owners/management and share-holders of willingly decreasing their salaries and profits respectfully in order to pay better salaries to employees would go a long way to ensuring a stable, peaceful and expanding economy. The writer advocates that right throughout the year the above economic education and disclosures should be conducted. Once all managers and supervisors are adequately trained in these matters, they can teach their subordinates during normal working activities, using repetition and different approaches to this educational process. The point to be stressed is that a few explanations when the new salaries are declared are far too late, especially when facing financially hard times as they tend to undermine reason which makes it easier for the workers to believe that higher salaries can be afforded. Unless the gap between the poor and the rich gets smaller, the economy is in danger and the rich stand to eventually lose their wealth, as was so often stated by Thabo Mbeki during his presidency. The writer believes that the proposed recommendations in this paragraph are understood by government and business. He, therefore, believes the country needs a new

breed of visionary, moral, economic leaders with the ability to convince business and government to implement the above and other steps necessary for economic education, stability and growth.

It must be admitted that the ANC leaders have all agreed on the need to eradicate poverty through economic growth. Many black politicians and business people in South Africa are championing the approach advocated by Onyeani. But it still seems that the message must get through to the majority of the people. And it appears that until a better working economic system than capitalism is found, Africa's material well-being will only come through 'global market capitalism [with rewards justly distributed]' (Greenspan 2008:529). Greenspan (:261) quotes Adam Smith, the author of *The Wealth of the Nations*, on the four keys to national prosperity: 'capital accumulation, free trade, an appropriate – but circumscribed – role for government, and the rule of law.' 'Ultimately this [economic development] depends on the country's people discovering the zeal within themselves to take charge of the future in the present' (Venter 1997:297). Will this happen? One cannot but feel that hope in Venter's first option (see above) is weakening by the day and that the other option is becoming more probable.

One negative indicator is the rise of *populism* in South Africa. Because the reasons for liberal democracy (bill of rights, entrenched constitution as the final authority, etc) are not fully understood by the poor, less educated and unskilled, it is easy when they are in the majority and feel cut off from their representative leaders to turn against the apparently uncaring leaders and claim they do not represent the people. 'When politics takes a populist turn, the message is that intellectuals and other social elites – those [not elected by the people] represented in the judiciary and the independent press, for instance – are to be regarded with suspicion and brought under the people's control' (Vincent 2009). 'In liberal democracies populist movements gain support when social processes [e.g. parliament, judiciary] seem to frustrate democratic input into the decision-making process' – when the democracy appears 'top down' instead of 'bottom up' (Vincent 2009). In populism it is claimed that the people are speaking, which sounds reasonable and even democratic. The problem though is that 'the will of the people' usually refers to the views of ordinary, unsophisticated people who don't fully appreciate the need for 'Individual rights, the independence of the judiciary, of universities, the media, the Reserve Bank and other dimensions of the democratic system' and that they are 'not subject to majority opinion' (Vincent 2009). The populist note is being sounded by the ANC Youth League president, Julius Malema. For instance, his stance in the uproar over the sexuality of South Africa's new 800 metre world champion: is she a

hermaphrodite, which her world record could possibly imply? Malema responded by saying such a creature is unknown in Africa which knows only a male or female, and discerns male or female by looking between the legs. Here is the voice of simple, ordinary South Africans who constitute the majority claiming to be the voice of the people by which the ANC claims to make its policies. Populism is not the road to prosperity for South Africa. Clearly populism is not a distant threat in South Africa, but right on its doorstep (cf the voice of the workers against the wisdom of capitalism and its institutions enshrined in the constitution).

Evangelicals have a basis to hope for Venter's first option because of the power of their God and the power of his Gospel. But at the moment evangelical Christians are making little difference to the grave economic situation in Africa. The writer is of the opinion this is because they have not generally been disciplined effectively in a theology and practice of work and development. A new understanding of the discipleship process is urgently needed. The writer hopes that the model of discipleship developed in this dissertation will produce converts being better equipped to exercise a transforming influence in Africa. Time is running out! Venter (1997:287-288,293-294) provides encouraging examples of other countries that solved similar problems South Africa is now facing.

There is another factor to be taken into account in understanding the economic challenges facing Africa, namely, inadequate infrastructure. Africa over the next ten years 'will need \$93-billion a year ... to meet its infrastructure needs' (Donnelly 2009a:34). 'In almost every sector – power, transport, roads, railways, ports, air transport, water and irrigation, and sanitation – African countries lag behind their counterparts in the rest of the developing world' (:34). The reality of the situation is that of the \$93-billion needed annually only \$45-billion is being spent on infrastructure, leaving a shortfall of \$48-billion per annum (:34). 'Closing Africa's infrastructure financing gap is critical to the region's prosperity' (:34). It seems Africa's governments hold the key to acquiring the funding necessary for infrastructure development so necessary in Africa. Sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 of this Chapter highlight where changes are necessary if foreign funding is to become a greater possibility and ensure aid is not wasted or misused.

Intellectuals are crucial to a country's economic and other development. As Nolan (2009:64) notes: 'The genuine intellectual ... is one who sees his or her intellectual work as providing a service to the community and society.' They thus do not just serve 'the interests of the rich and the powerful' but especially 'the poor and the needy, the marginalized and the outcasts' (:64). They serve the interests of change 'that will benefit everyone' and overcome 'the contradictions and injustices in society' (:64). Gumede and Dikeni (2009:5) are concerned

about the place of intellectuals in South Africa: ‘they appear to have been displaced by the ‘soundbite’, the so-called ‘expert’ television analyst, the servile intellectual and the ideologue howling down critical debate and dissent as ‘sellout’, unpatriotic and even as ‘un-African’ (if the critic is black) or ‘racist’ (if the critic is white).’ The intellectual discourse in South Africa ‘has often appeared to be dominated by the state, rather than by those outside the state’ (:6) and has declined ‘in vibrancy ... within the ANC and within society as a whole’ (:9). Post-liberation Africa has withdrawn into nativistic solutions and a resulting form of tribalism which have ‘been behind the collapse of many post-independence nation-building projects’ (:6). Gumede and Dikeni see research priorities as failing to include how to meet ‘the needs of the vulnerable and marginalized [and poor]’ (:9). The stifling of a robust role for the intellectual has led African countries ‘to neglect to build a democratic political culture [and to] often slide back into ghost democracies, of which Zimbabwe is a good example’ (Gumede 2009:12). The quenching of intellectual debate on the cause of AIDS during Thabo Mbeki’s presidency because of his denialism was only countered by Makgoba, head of the Medical Research Council, for which he was attacked by leading ANC officials and leaders (including a group of senior cabinet ministers), with one abusive letter accusing him of betraying his race and not being a real black person (:15). Intellectual criticism of incompetent and corrupt liberation leaders and poor government policies or their application is often taken ‘as an attack on the legitimacy of the liberation struggle – which they are patently not’ (:17). Clearly such a response to necessary critique stifles intellectual discourse with damaging effects on the economy and South Africa’s young democracy. Sadly the vision of a broad South African identity and a country that is built on ‘the best elements of our diverse histories and cultures’ is waning and the nation is being divided into ‘natives and non-natives ... a step away from reimposing an ethnic criterion for South Africanness’ (:32). Needless to say, this development will undermine national unity and economic development.

The Church in Africa needs to mould Christians better able to positively influence the economies.

#### 5.2.10 The Problem of poverty

Evangelical Christians believe that the Bible teaches that every community has divinely-imparted creative capacity, no matter what the past and present circumstances, and can therefore and should develop its economy into a self-sustaining, growing one. The writer believes that help from first world agencies and governments, international banks and international businesses will be important and will be offered if Africans play their God-

expected part and if sincere and aggressive efforts are made to put right problems raised in this Chapter. Clearly poverty eradication in the world is the greatest challenge the world currently faces.

In South Africa in 2004 it was reckoned that about twenty-six million people lived below the bread/poverty line (57% of the population) and the majority of these people were black (L'Ange 2005:490). Another survey arrived at a figure of between 40% and 60% of the urban labour force live 'in squatter shacks in informal settlements' (:490). It is also predicted that there could be multi-millions of black foreigners – war and economic refugees, indicating that poverty in other African countries is worse than in South Africa. A group of students from the Institute returned from a trip to Malawi and related levels of poverty there they had not witnessed in South Africa. Sadly, poverty is abetted in Africa through sexual immorality. Sexual lust, especially when accompanied by intoxication, leads to unprotected sex and HIV transmission and unwanted pregnancies. An AIDS sufferer who cannot work and more babies in poverty circumstances mean more poverty for the family. The tragedy of unchecked poverty is that it breeds more poverty. Humans have been created in God's image and therefore have inherent dignity. Since poverty degrades humans, it could be argued that Christians should do all in their power to prevent and remove it. The writer feels that in South Africa the government has led the way in this regard, rather than the church. A good example is the social grant system (admittedly coming from taxes and therefore also from Christians through their taxes).

Unfortunately the government's welfare grants have had a disconcerting and unexpected spin-off. The various grants were designed to take the edge off poverty so that the poor families' unemployed members would have the strength to hunt for jobs or create a micro-business. One of the writer's older black students informed him that these grants are actually undermining able-bodied people from seeking or creating work because they can survive on some relative's old-age government pension and/or other welfare grants. Further, some young girls facing poverty are deliberately seeking sex with HIV-infected men or injecting themselves with infected blood in order to qualify for one of the grants. The student also mentioned that some young women are having unwanted babies to qualify for one of the maintenance grants in order to have money for items for themselves, like clothes. There is no intention of using the money for the baby, who is usually dumped on the mother or elderly granny, who does not have enough income or strength or health to rear the baby properly. The writer has also been told that young female black university students seek out older,

financially well-off men and offer them sex for financial support that is required, often being infected with HIV in the process. Clearly a high level of poverty in the population is spawning other disturbing problems which are exacerbating the already grave poverty situation.

The Institute attempted to train the students in holistic ministry so that their Gospel will reach not only to the needs of the minds and spirits of the people, but also the needs of their bodies. The writer is convinced from the Bible that the Gospel is concerned with both spiritual and physical human needs. Why would there be a resurrection of the body if salvation was not concerned with delivering the body from all needs and ensure its full provision, development and unhindered operation. Jesus fed the hungry indicating God's concern for the body as well. A Gospel that does not speak to one's total needs – e.g. work, education, food, housing, clothes, clean water, respect and love – is surely no Gospel. Nolan (cited in Kretzschmar 2000:44-45) reminds Christians that the following Gospel values mean Christians should have wide spiritual, moral and social influence in society: sharing; honouring human dignity; human solidarity; and service. Kretzschmar (2000:51) rightly states that Christians cannot remain indifferent in a context 'in which thousands of people are faced with the daily challenges of poverty, unemployment, various forms of violence and abuse, hopelessness and shattered dreams.' Clearly more leaders in Africa need to be trained in holistic ministry if the Gospel is to have any credibility. Nürnberger (1990:207) reminds the church that 'Redemption, salvation and deliverance are concepts which only make sense if they are defined as responses to real needs.' The Gospel is not to be 'sterilised, pasteurized, homogenized, bottled up and stored in a pharmacy' (Nürnberger 1990:209). If it is, 'it is an empty concept' (:210). Mofokeng (1990:172) sees contextual relevance in Africa as alleviating the condition of the downtrodden, including the poor, in their contemporary struggles. He believes any theology and discipleship training should take this situation as its starting point (:172). This kind of theological approach has been labeled 'theology from below' (Bosch 1991:423). Bosch (:427) states we need 'an ongoing dialogue ... between text and context' – the only way to guarantee that the Gospel touches every area of life. If the evangelical church works harder in this needed ministry alongside evangelism, it will give Christianity greater attractiveness. Where political systems are guilty of unrighteousness and injustice, especially where this leads to or entrenches poverty, Christians need to work towards establishing a just and righteous society. The Church is always called 'to side with the oppressed and to alert the world to unjust situations' (Ndungane 2004:26). Jeremiah (Lam 3:34-36) informs God's people that withholding human rights and justice from the people is

seen by God and meets with his righteous indignation and disapproval. This is sinful, against God's will, and therefore Christians need to work with God to bring about righteous societies, to be part of his programme of restoring righteousness to the world, the hallmark of the new earth. Kretzschmar (2000:40) notes that with the Old Testament prophets 'spiritual and social morality were not artificially separated (Isaiah 1:16-20; Isaiah 58:1-12; Micah 6:6-8; and Zechariah 8:14-17).' Christians therefore 'dare not ignore unjust economic systems, the negative aspects of globalization and important health issues. God's agenda is not just to souls, but the entire cosmos' (Pazmino 1997:169). Daneel (cited in Mugabe 1995b:16) urges evangelism to present salvation in its wider perspective – 'as [also] extending to all creation'. We must also therefore work towards 'preservation of our eco-systems and national resources' (:26). Growth in personal righteousness should thus go hand in hand with concern about righteousness in the land, which will eliminate dehumanizing poverty. The Christian's goal in ministry should 'be to bring about through the gospel, the transformation of individuals, society, and environment (1Peter 2:11ff; 1Timothy 2:1-6)'; this calls for 'holistic ministry characterized by the following': serving people and caring 'for their felt needs' as well as building 'genuine friendships'; working 'together with people of all backgrounds on issues of common concern, such as drug abuse, youth issues, unemployment, and racism'; treating people 'with mutual respect, dignity, and generosity' (The New People Next Door 2004). If the ministry of Jesus is an indicator of God's plans for a restored world, then it can be argued that Christian service should include evangelization, healing and the pursuit of political, social and economic justice and the elimination of degrading poverty and its concomitant suffering.

Walker (1993:17-19) traces the history of social action among evangelicals and shows that apart from a few exceptions, e.g. the Salvation Army, William Wilberforce, the story is a sad one. Evangelicals have concentrated on evangelism, conversion, teaching the doctrines of the Bible, living holy lives and ministering to spiritual and psychological needs. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that evangelicals have lived up until the beginning of the twentieth century mostly in countries where material needs have been minimal or non-existent. Most evangelicals in the West and many in Asian countries enjoy a good standard of living. These conditions have not required the need to develop a holistic ministry. Chapters 1 and 2 have showed that the majority of evangelicals today are in second world (developing) and third-world (undeveloped) countries, where material and physical needs are overwhelming. Discipleship in Africa has to reckon with the Gospel's answer to poverty and unemployment.



Where there is total dependency on Western churches an indigenous holistic ministry will not flourish. Occasional financial help from wealthy churches in the first-world is appropriate and necessary at times (cf the Gentile churches' gift to the believers in Judea experiencing a period of poverty, but not through their laziness). However, African church leaders would be well served if they could be trained in a theology of work and development. This is a necessary foundation for building a successful work ethic and development strategy. Much material has been written on this subject of development in Africa, its failures and successes, from both biblical and secular perspectives (e.g. Miller 2001). This dissertation cannot explore this material, but recommends it to African church leaders.

Less than six million South African citizens pay personal tax and about twenty-four million adults are registered on the voters' role according to a tax consultant known to the writer. A number of the tax-payers are retired, so do not hold a job. Possibly hundreds of thousands of South Africans buy and sell a few commodities on the street or from home. In most of these cases we are dealing with the equivalent of an hour or two per day of productive work. There are no doubt many taxi owners whose taxi businesses are not registered and employ more than one driver. One must also factor in those who are employed but earn insufficient to pay tax. Then one must also take into account those who are eighteen years and older who are not on the voters role. It would seem that if one took the working population in terms of the equivalent of full-time employees, we could be talking of about ten million people. There are probably about twenty-six million adults that should be on the voters' role. Based on these speculative figures one is talking about an employment (full-time equivalent) rate of about 40% or a 60% unemployment rate of the adults eighteen years and older. These figures will need adjusting to allow for tertiary students and retirees who are not looking for a job. The writer and many of his informed contacts are of the opinion that the government employment figures are misleading or inaccurate or deliberately skewed.

The South African ANC-led government claims in its pronouncements to be concerned about the widespread poverty in the country and to have policies that are tackling the problem, e.g. infrastructure development is creating more work. For sixteen years the public has been bombarded with grandiose plans, promises, success stories, and time-schedules of change. The reality is that every government department has failed to adequately deliver in the area of poverty relief (except perhaps the Department of Welfare). Rather than poverty being beaten, it has grown. The causes are largely understood by the government, business and the church. The writer believes that all three spheres urgently need new leaders who can mobilize Christians and others in the nation to acknowledge the causes and apply the solutions. Since

many of the reasons for poverty can be reduced mostly to moral problems (see above and below), the church's role in the fight against poverty in central. This role needs to start with discipleship of converts to spiritual maturity as this alone will overcome the moral deficit. The writer stresses to his students that the great need in Africa – in the church, society and government – is new leadership. That is the great need of the hour (see below).

A few comments on Dr Mohammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank are thought worthwhile with which to end this section. He delivered the 7<sup>th</sup> Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture in which he spoke about his great success in Bangladesh and beyond his country in micro-lending to the poor to start a micro business to pull them out of poverty. The story of his life and work in empowering the poor through micro-capital loans is recorded in his book *Banker to the Poor: Micro-Lending and the Battle Against World Poverty*. Grameen Bank was the first bank to try micro-lending as a vehicle to end poverty. The villagers are provided with loans at 20% interest with no collateral or previous credit. Borrowers are not required to pay back at any particular time. A program for the borrowers to follow is provided, and if a borrower does not repay the loan, he/she is not allowed to borrow again. Grameen boasts over a 98% repayment rate which is truly outstanding. In Bangladesh the poor weave baskets, make food, etc.. The loans enable the borrowers to purchase raw materials, make a profit and repay the loans. There are many success stories. One interesting feature of Grameen Bank is that it is predominantly to women that it lends. It has found that lending to women is more effective than lending to men as the former spend the money on their families or housing improvements, whereas the men tend to spend the money on themselves. 'Today Grameen Bank has totalled a loan of \$ 6 billion to 7 million families in rural Bangladesh. More than 250 institutions in nearly 100 countries operate micro-credit programs based on Grameen methodology. This has placed Grameen at the forefront of a burgeoning world movement toward eradicating poverty through micro-lending' (Manlutac 2009). This bank is the 'most successful bank specializing in micro lending to marginalized communities in the world' (Manlutac 2009). Dr Yunus has done more than all the governments combined to alleviate world poverty, and together with Grameen Bank was recognized and honoured for this with the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.

The writer has found himself wondering how well this micro-lending to start micro-businesses would work in poor areas of South Africa. Clearly those who have managed to operate micro-operations successfully would benefit immensely and repay loans. It is hard to imagine the many who have no skills or drive using micro-lending to get themselves out of poverty and dependency on the state and family members. But certainly Yunus has proved

that empowerment of the poor is possible if money can be lent unconditionally to dependable people desperate to break out of the poverty cycle. He is an inspiration to Christians in Africa, especially as he started his organization with about \$30. Yunus is concerned with long term solutions to poverty. In his lecture he said, “Charity is not a solution to poverty. Charity freezes poverty temporarily or even makes it worst. We should not subscribe to charity. What we need is to create opportunities for creativity. For the unemployed to find ways to make their contribution to the world economy” (cited in Manlutac 2009). The challenge is clear for the Church.

#### 5.2.11 The problem of poor leadership

The above problems facing Africa reveal a common cause: an absence of genuine leadership in the family, the church, business, government, labour and society at large. South Africa at present is going through a crisis of leadership at Eskom. Not only does it have a leadership mess, days are going by without the leaders being able to sort out the leadership debacle. The price to the country if the leadership fiasco is not resolved soon is grave: ‘If Eskom implodes and we are faced, yet again, with power cuts, on the heels of a crippling recession, we are dooming our chances of recovery. Businesses can’t face further losses in productivity after they’ve already cut operations and the jobs that go with them’ (Editorial, Mail&Guardian 2009:22). Armscor is also facing a leadership problem as efforts are made to dismiss its CEO (:22). These crises are unfolding ‘at a time when other parastatals have been hit with similar leadership crises’ (Donnelly 2009b:32). ‘In recent weeks on this page we have asked the same question over and over: where the hell is leadership?’ (Editorial, Mail&Guardian 2009:22). President Zuma’s Presidential Complaints Hotline has already faltered in its first nine weeks as the DA Party has discovered. From its use of the hotline it is apparent that ‘all the hotline does is refer complaints received to the relevant department, usually the source of the original problem [which achieves nothing]. It has no power to enforce deadlines or sanctions on that department’ (Trollip 2009). Without the necessary leadership this hotline will continue to fail. Through poor leadership in the public health department, the reasonably well-functioning health infrastructure has been run down and the costs to build it up again are sky high. The Thabo Mbeki AIDS denialism has led to some 300 000 people unnecessarily dying of AIDS, another example of failed leadership (Special Assignment 2009). True leadership discerns the real problems holding back progress, has a vision of a better future (for what could and should be), grasps the real solutions to the problems and way forward, and motivates and leads people in a combined effort to attain the vision. Clearly the great need of the hour in

evangelical circles in Africa is a new quality of leadership: people of (i) vision for the transformation of Africa through evangelical Christians being examples, emissaries and promoters of the kingdom of God; (ii) humility, to admit that the church in Africa has not lived up to its calling primarily through poor discipleship; and (iii) courage, to call God's people to repent and fulfil her kingdom role in Africa for the sake of her people and above all for the glory of God. Such leadership will craft and entrench a new model of discipleship that will re-define God's role for his people, namely the transformation of individuals, communities, countries, continents, and one day the whole world in the consummation of the eschatological kingdom. God is passionate about his kingdom on earth. The writer believes his church therefore should be as well. The African church can look back to earlier times when she played a greater role in development projects aimed at overcoming 'the enemies of ignorance, disease and poverty' (Baur 1998:485,486). 'Their success was usually much greater than that of the government programmes' (:486).

The writer's own experience in his local church illustrates the need for the above quality of leadership. He approached the church council many months ago about using the church-owned house, which could be extended and is now being rented out, to create a home for AIDS orphans. The need is urgent and growing daily. The church has three medical doctors and a number of nurses, some of whom are retired. It also has the ideal couple to be 'family parents.' The church also has a number of black members and access to additional black helpers from the Bible Institute Eastern Cape. The church has a wonderful opportunity to practice the scriptural injunction to look after orphans. This would be a kingdom ministry bringing God's love and care to children who desperately need this ministry and to be a testimony to the world of God's love. If sufficient money was a problem the members could sell their houses and purchase cheaper ones, ride less expensive cars, and save money in other ways. The church members could all share in the ministry in different ways and according to their gifts and availability of time in order to share the load. There are no real obstacles. The blessing that would come to the orphans and the church would be immense. And what an example it would be to non-Christians that would come to hear about or observe such a caring ministry. The idea was unsuccessful. Clearly it would take the above kind of leadership to launch this orphanage. In fairness it needs to be noted that the rental on the church house is being used in missions. Recently street children started attending the writer's church. Though some information about them has been shared with the church and one member is directly involved with them and some provide some sandwiches every Sunday, there has been no talk of the church taking up the burden of their needs for the kind of home, opportunities and

training that will bring them to spiritual, moral, social and mental maturity in order to escape future poverty and crime and be able to contribute to the development of the country.

The writer has felt the pressing need of orphaned babies and children in Africa. His heart and God's word say adopt. He has discussed his struggle with others. The writer at sixty years of age and his younger wife could be considered too old to start the parenting cycle all over again. Yet he knows of numerous grandparents that reared children (often grandchildren), and some who are in their sixties and seventies and rearing HIV-positive orphans. It is thought that the attachment to the adopted child will be so great that it would be too painful not being able to afford the same material blessings, especially the medical care, that were provided for one's own children. The writer cannot see how any financial limitations, e.g. no private medical aid, would mean loving the orphan less than his own children. Further, surely God could be trusted to handle the matter of financial needs. The writer can see that an upbringing in a loving, godly home with just the bare material necessities is a thousands times better than no home or a child-headed home or a home starved of love, food and nurturing and surrounded by crime, gross neglect and debauchery. There must be many others like the writer with these inner stirrings to serve God more effectively and sacrificially. Would not a superior quality of church leadership release this potential loving ministry? It strikes the writer as ironic that middle and upper class Christians and churches are super-wealthy compared to people living in a squatter area in a tiny single room without water, electricity, sewerage and a job, and yet have little money to spare to counter the poverty crisis in Africa, especially among Christians. Is the answer not a complete downsizing of lifestyle to free more capital for poverty alleviation and job creation? Why is this decision so hard for evangelical Christians to take, even considered impossible? The writer believes that the answer lies in a new dynamic leadership that will facilitate the unleashing of the full power of God's loving grace through his servant people.

The liberation leaders failed to clarify to the people of Africa that liberation would not mean immediate Western middle-class standards for all blacks. They would have known that the transition from the African traditional way of life to a modern capitalistic first-world economy and country would take far more than cheap, careless promises, redistribution and affirmative action. The writer believes the history of independent Africa shows that the leaders have lacked humility, underestimated the challenges of running a modern country, and capitalized on the masses' ignorance in their promises to them in order to ensconce themselves in power with access to state wealth. A first-world economy operates with a highly, broadly skilled,

competitive work-force. The ANC leaders, therefore, would know that policies like the following would not augur well for the efficiency of the government and the future growth of the economy: affirmative action with its enforced racial, gender and salary equity levels, BEE, and preferential procurement. The government has over 300 000 unfilled government posts, many of which are at middle and higher management levels. Apart from a breakdown in implementing employment procedures in government departments, this situation also exists because there are simply not enough people adequately qualified for these jobs. It has been pointed out by black politicians that there are enough unemployed black graduates to fill the vacant government posts requiring degreed employees and many more over that should be employed in the private sector. But as noted above, the majority of black graduates scrape through their degrees and are not suitable for middle management and higher level positions, even with further training as experience has now shown. The present state of education, the home and morality will ensure that the country produces more and more unemployables, a disaster for the economy. Thus the government's policies will ensure the weakening of the economy and stifle further needed growth.

The ANC leaders would have been aware that their economic policies, in particular affirmative action, would precipitate a 'brain drain' of whites and from the other groups (over one million) from the country with disastrous long term effects on all government departments, industry and the economy. Haffajee (2008:14) notes the end result of massive skills loss: 'There is little manufacturing to speak of, the economy returns to its commodities base and public services hardly exist.' Clearly the brain drain is 'devastating for the national economy' (Jansen 2008:188). Hardly a month goes by without some professional or entrepreneur or technician or manager known to the writer or one of his family members leaving South Africa for greener economic, industrial, political and security pastures. Three conclusions seem to the writer to be inescapable in the light of the government's policies: (i) It is too painful for black South Africa to acknowledge that the development gap between the majority of blacks and whites is going to take more than a generation to erase (even assuming the education system and family life are fixed/transformed), (ii) ANC leaders have followed the above policies because it would ensure the ANC stayed in power with the financial perks, status and privileges, and (iii) they lack the moral strength and persuasion to promote, defend and gain acceptance from the masses for unpopular policies aimed at, firstly, moral reformation, and, secondly, at long-term sustainable economic growth.

The policies needed to achieve a growing and sustainable economy would require short term austerity measures, voluntary affirmative action, and a commitment by black and white to

closing the development and financial gaps as fast as possible without any negative impact on the economy, and a South African identity not founded on race. Further, they would necessitate all South Africans, from individuals to business empires, injecting 'time, energy and money into our dysfunctional educational system' and the birthing of 'a culture of hope and opportunity for our children and teenagers' (Dommissie 2009a:15), or as Fransman (2009) puts it, South Africa would need 'an education and skills revolution driven by a renewed spirit of activism' and 'patriotism' that 'cannot be delayed' and 'dare not .... fail.' Only the right leadership will be able to bring this about and steer the country to a prosperous, stable and safe future for all. The writer believes that evangelical churches where discipleship is an ongoing priority and reality should produce a number of just such leaders.

Apart from being taught the doctrines of the faith, this dissertation has opened up and highlighted other areas that are relevant to discipleship. The writer would posit that the sad state of the church and countries in Africa is largely because discipleship of Christian converts has not taken all these other areas into account? Another problem resulting from poor or no discipleship, is that discipleship is not thought to be necessary, a mindset that perpetuates spiritual infancy; further, it makes it almost impossible for later discipleship of the convert as he/she has settled into certain patterns of behaviour that cannot be easily changed. If the evangelical churches in Africa had more true leaders, discipleship would not have suffered to the point where evangelicals are not a force to be reckoned with in Africa.

In the writer's teaching he discussed with his black students Africa's many problems in and outside the churches and possible solutions. He drew them into the debate, no matter how painful it was for him or them. He was driven by the fact that Africa is at an impasse. She needs a new approach to her past and her present if transformation is ever to become a glorious reality. The political leaders have had their say and Africa still bleeds. The writer believes that in the light of this dissertation, South Africa needs a group of new leaders comprising white, coloured, black and Indian in the fields of education, politics, business, labour, academia and religion (not only Christianity) sold on an African success story; and who will commit themselves to discovering the best way to take South Africa forward in the light of the themes raised in this dissertation and other relevant issues that such a group deems necessary and documents resulting from other similar think tanks, e.g. the NIRSA Declaration of Intent. The writer would not make this recommendation if any of the previous imbizos, indabas, commissions and conferences in the country had found the answers to facilitating major, widespread new development in South Africa. The results of such a process would then need to be tested first privately in the presence of ordinary South Africans across the

racial and social continuum and then before the wider political spectrum and populace. For any such initiative to succeed it would need to unite all groups and parties in South Africa to make substantial sacrifice and go through a number of lean years while laying the foundation for eventual sustainable provision for all its people.

The writer's experience with hundreds of black students of all ages, gender and backgrounds, is that the debate on Africa must go back to the past and the present with new eyes: eyes that see both the negative and the positive results of the missionary endeavour, colonialism, ATR, and in the case of South Africa, apartheid, the mistakes and successes in the post-independence period, and the likely scenario today if Africa had been left alone by Europe except for mutual trading. The hard question of why South Africa is the wealthiest African country and considered the USA of Africa must be entertained and honestly answered. Yes it resulted from a partnership between black and white. This partnership therefore needs to be acknowledged by black and white and maintained and strengthened in ways that do not weaken the economy and retard growth. Only once this unfinished business of analyzing the past and the present, which includes facing the extent of the development gap between most blacks and whites and the realistic time-frame necessary to close this gap, is honestly and successfully concluded by all parties and embraced by the majority of the people, will the way be cleared to plot a future based on ALL the lessons from the past and the present. Makhanya (2009) calls for the same strategy: 'We should ... be confronting our past and present honestly and frankly. This will enable us to chart a clear path forward.' Only such an exercise is up to the challenge of uniting friend and foe, black and white, rich and poor, sceptic and visionary, left and right wing, unskilled and skilled, patient and impatient, labour and business, ANC and DP (and other parties), minority groups and the masses, theist and atheist, in a social contract that will bring about the new South Africa all South Africans desire. The writer is totally convinced that this wonderful future will never be attained without leaders from all racial/ethnic, religious and political groups competent to handle the past and present with fearless honesty and the future with unblinkered realism, oceans of patience and encouragement, and tireless hope. Is the desired future not the kind of future the Apostle Paul calls all Christians in Africa to pray for in 1 Timothy 2:2 (a peaceful future) that pleases God (2:3)? The passage shows that government leaders determine the state of a country. Africa, therefore, awaits the calibre of leaders that can bring about the transformation it so urgently needs and longs for.

The next few verses after verses 2 and 3 in 1 Timothy 2 show the further crucial role the church needs to play in Africa: evangelization, including of political leaders (which has been



a major focus of *African Enterprise* whose basic aim is to evangelize the African continent by bringing Christianity to all sections of African leadership). The implication is that the more leaders and other people that are converted to Christ the safer and more productive the church and society will be. This passage also supports the writer's contention that the church should be concerned about God's reign in society as God is (cf Jer 23:5-6). For the evangelical this Jeremiah passage brings together imputed (see God's name in v6) and practical righteousness and demonstrates the importance of righteousness and justice in a country (this is God's will and therefore should be the church's goal), something that will only be fully realized in the new heavens and earth through God's final miraculous intervention and consummation of his kingdom. In the meantime Kretzschmar (2000:61) states that praying for God's will on earth should go hand in hand with being concerned about the many situations Christians know are a denial of that will.

The writer believes it necessary to again stress that the greatest challenge facing leadership in Africa is the handling of 'the double disadvantage of the time warp and of the past white domination' (L'Ange 2005:498). When Africa was confronted by advanced Western technology and science its peoples 'weren't yet ready for it. They were several centuries behind in time; some were where the Britons had been some two thousand years previously, and the peoples of the Mediterranean and Middle East even earlier' (:496). Africa had been 'caught in a backwater of time, untouched by the social currents, the exchanges of trade and ideas, that had long been swirling between the Mediterranean and the Far East, and northwards into Europe' (:495). The time warp was accentuated by the fact that 'Social development tends to be exponential – the more a society knows the faster it increases its knowledge' (:496). It was the West's superior technology backed by strong economic and political systems that enabled the whites to dominate Africa and its peoples (:496). L'Ange (:496) perceptively notes that 'It was essentially from the time warp phenomenon and its coincidence with physical difference that racism was born.' The wisdom leaders require in tackling the time warp phenomenon is immense, especially as Africans are 'no less intelligent than Europeans and can easily adopt technology provided all other factors are equal – which they are still not ...' (:496). Equalizing all factors will ever be the greatest challenge to South Africa's leaders and never likely to be fully conquered, and hence the need for exceptional leaders. Clearly leaders are needed who will successfully counter white prejudice, superiority and exploitation, and black inferiority and the practice of blaming the whites for most of Africa's problems. As one African put it (cited in Pollard 1995:25): 'Blacks know what they have done. Blacks know what they have not done. Blacks know what they must do. There is

no more time for wimpish lament, self-pity, begging or praying.’ Both whites and blacks throughout Africa need to be persuaded that African backwardness is not due to intellectual inferiority or shortcomings, but ‘because of environmental and other factors having nothing to do with intelligence’ (:495). In the light of Chapter 5 it could be argued that without colonialism and its destructive impact on social systems, the Africans would perhaps have made faster progress within their natural ethnic, cultural and territorial boundaries in catching up with the Europeans (:494). ‘European colonialism and settlement on balance did Africa more harm than good’ (:492). Many would reject this claim and believe Africa would have been worse off, especially economically. One argument here states that without colonialism the precious metals and other raw products would have only been mined much later and at a slower rate; and that education and infrastructure would not have developed to their present extent. In other words Africa would have been far more behind in scientific and technological development with less hope of closing the development gap. However, what can be said is that current Africa needs more leaders like Nelson Mandela if the developmental needs are to be met.

#### 5.2.12 Problem of a lack of morality

There can be no escaping the conclusion that Africa is facing a moral crisis. This is its real problem that underlies the other problems. The writer’s black students unequivocally recognized and accepted this. Kretzschmar (2000:42) notes that ‘there does seem to be general consensus that without a moral basis, the hope for a better South Africa is but wishful thinking.’ It has been noted in Chapter 4 that many of Africa’s problems stem from the collective sins of Africa, which result from a lack of moral behaviour and which need to be overcome. A major theme of the Old Testament is that Israel’s sins led to diseases, droughts, social inequalities, crime, economic failure, bad government and ultimately the destruction of the land of Israel and exile. The government of South Africa, all political parties, and the news media also admit the problems facing the continent lie in the area of morality. Both the rich and the poor are guilty of immoral ethics. The media in South Africa is daily peppered with accounts of malfunctioning municipalities, stories of failed moral leadership in regional and central government departments and parastatals. It appears to be the norm to appoint individuals to all strategic positions on the basis of loyalty to the ANC or dominant ANC faction and not on competency. Nepotism and cronyism are freely practiced, another factor that contributes towards non-delivery. ‘The reality is that at many levels ANC structures have become patronage machines to reward friends and allies, through government tenders, contracts and appointments’ (Gumede 2009:26). The writer’s black students had difficulty

seeing anything immoral in favouring the appointment of a family member when filling a post. Many examples could be given of top government officials managing in dictatorial styles, often conducting a reign of terror. Even the judicial system has not escaped the immoral onslaught. The moral rot pervades society from the highest echelons of power and influence right through to the hardened violent criminals. The government has organized conferences/*imbizos* on transforming people's morals (one example is the *imbizo* that included church, government and community representatives convened in Bisho), but to no avail. The writer believes that if ALL evangelicals in Africa could admit the real problem, put their houses in order, and work for righteousness in the public arena, Africa could be poised for unbelievable transformation and development – for a real foretaste of God's ultimate shalom.

Morality is developed in the early years of life. This means that without stable, loving, moral and nurturing families society will ever be plagued with a moral crisis. 'There are no adequate substitutes for father, mother, and children bound together in a loving commitment to nurture and protect. No government, no matter how well-intentioned, can take the place of the family in the scheme of things' (Ford cited in Larsen 2007:64). Africa, therefore, desperately needs one whole generation to experience a two-parent home and schooling environment that provides excellent spiritual, moral and educational training. On reaching adulthood such a generation would be significantly free from crime, corruption, sexual immorality and perversion, laziness, unproductivity, political intolerance, poverty, hopelessness and equipped to play a major role in updating and expanding Africa's technology and economy. The majority of the writer's students came from communities that were poor educationally and economically and to a lesser or greater degree morally as well, and from broken homes where the father was absent and usually disconnected from the children. This means that the generation about to start families or which already has young children, i.e. parents in their twenties and thirties, will find it difficult because of their upbringing to raise a generation that will be able to kick-start the massive development of African countries. The challenge is for the churches and governments to focus all their efforts on radical moral regeneration. Since moral acts issue from virtuous character – 'who we are is prior to what we do' (Hulley 2000:63) – character transformation is vital. To fail here will mean failure in all other areas of society. The challenge is enormous. Humanly-speaking it is an impossible one. The writer reminded his students that the Gospel is God's answer; that the church has the answer, and the world is waiting to see God's transforming power working mightily in the church and through

the church in society at large. Clearly a new approach to and seriousness about Christian discipleship is most urgent.

### **5.3 Facing the future**

For the Christian believer the future can be faced with great hope. The writer spent time with his students championing the hope of change in the African continent because of the evangelical belief in the power of the Gospel to transform lives, societies and even countries. The tragedy in Africa is that the evangelical churches profess this belief and comprise a high proportion of the population, but have stifled this power and contributed very little to the spiritual, moral and development needs of Africa. The writer has been a Christian for forty years and visited and served many evangelical churches, including Reformed churches, in South Africa and has also visited evangelical churches overseas. The problem in all these situations was/is a truncated vision of the Gospel's transforming power and the power of humble, prophetic witness to the principles of God's kingdom. The perceived focus of Gospel power is the Christian's personal life and translation at death to heaven for eternity; and existence in heaven is generally conceived as totally divorced from life on earth (but see Chapter 4). Sadly the eschatological vision of the kingdom of God on earth is, therefore, not characteristic of evangelicals. God is supposedly not interested in his reign over the whole earth in this age, but only in the hearts and lives of Christians, especially as Christians are destined for heaven and the earth for destruction. But as argued in Chapter 4, God is not only profoundly interested in his kingdom rule at the present time, but his future eternal kingdom will be on this earth (but a restored, perfected earth), and life in it will, therefore, be similar to life as Christians now live it. The writer believes that this means it is possible to experience more of God's kingdom rule over all the earth now, in the present world. Just as Christians successfully work towards more of God's reign in their lives, so they should work towards more of his reign in this world (cf the Lord's Prayer). The writer does not see this interpretation of the kingdom as implying a social Gospel or violently overthrowing sinful governments and ideologies. However, the Gospel is focused on all reality now and not only in the future at the return of Christ. God, therefore, cannot be honoured if millions of evangelical believers in Africa are not concerned to see God's righteousness and justice (which would include healing African identity and removing poverty and other human degradation) operating in Africa at all levels of society, including in caring for the physical earth and all its life forms, something intrinsic to and promoted in ATR. Just as every believer is to strive for greater personal holiness, righteousness, peace and love even though perfection will only occur at the return of Christ, so the writer believes Christians should strive for

righteousness and shalom in the world even though their perfect experience on the earth will only happen in the new purified earth. The salvific goal for all creation should be the goal towards which the church strives. To aim for a lesser goal throughout this life is to dishonour the Gospel and be out of step with God's cosmic programme.

William Wilberforce's life-long, successful campaign in the British parliament to abolish slavery is a fine example of a Christian working for God's righteousness in the world. Wilberforce understood that government is there to see that there is justice in the land and he spared no energy in promoting and working for the ousting of the injustice of slavery. He developed 'new ways of rousing public opinion (such as the pamphlet wars, petitions, graphic prints, local societies and voters guides)' (Hammond nd:8). His courageous crusade inspired a new generation of statesmen to speak in favour of the Abolition Bill and finally secure by an Act of Parliament the freedom of all 700 000 slaves in British overseas territories (:7). Wilberforce 'determined to put his faith into action in the political arena and he persevered for 59 years to outlaw one of the most inhumane – and profitable – practices of his time' (:8). Wilberforce 'became the national conscience and the effect of his actions on succeeding generations was extraordinary. He pioneered a new political integrity in an age of corruption and transformed the House of Commons from a self serving club to an Assembly concerned for the common good of people worldwide' (:8). Perkins (cited in Hammond nd:4) records that 'between 1780 and 1850 the English ceased to be one of the most aggressive, brutal, rowdy, outspoken, riotous, cruel and bloodthirsty nations in the world and become one of the most inhibited, polite, orderly, tender-minded ...'

In this dissertation it has emerged that effective discipleship of Christian converts is the base line for the church. This is where the great journey and mission of the church is meant to start. The church can never hope to march closer and closer its ultimate goal of individual and societal righteousness unless it commences here. The writer, therefore, passionately explained to his students and urged upon them the importance of proper and timely discipleship if there is to be meaningful progress on this journey towards the finale of human history and the beginning of a new history on a new earth.

God's redemptive plans for the universe are the greatest proof that God will work with Christians who zealously work for his reign in all sectors of life and society, starting in the individual Christian, then the church, and after that through the church in all the world. The writer believes this may include revivals similar to historical evangelical revivals. He does not consider that seeking to bring society under God's rule implies that all citizens must first be converted, or that non-converted people are capable of living the Christian life. But he does

believe that Christians should make known, defend and seek God's kingdom standards in all stations of life, and demonstrate their superiority and power in their lives and their churches. Belief in God's eventual complete metamorphosis of this world provides Christians with a sure hope that God will bless their efforts to bring about an Africa where there is peace, justice, absence of dehumanizing poverty, love for all fellow humans, universal quality education and medical care, jobs for all, and human wholeness and development. The writer, as noted above, sees utopia *only* at the *parousia*, not before. But it is this vision that should engender passion for the standards of God's kingdom in Africa. The vision goes hand-in-hand with should with the goal of effective discipleship of converts.

#### 5.4 Pastoral approaches to syncretism

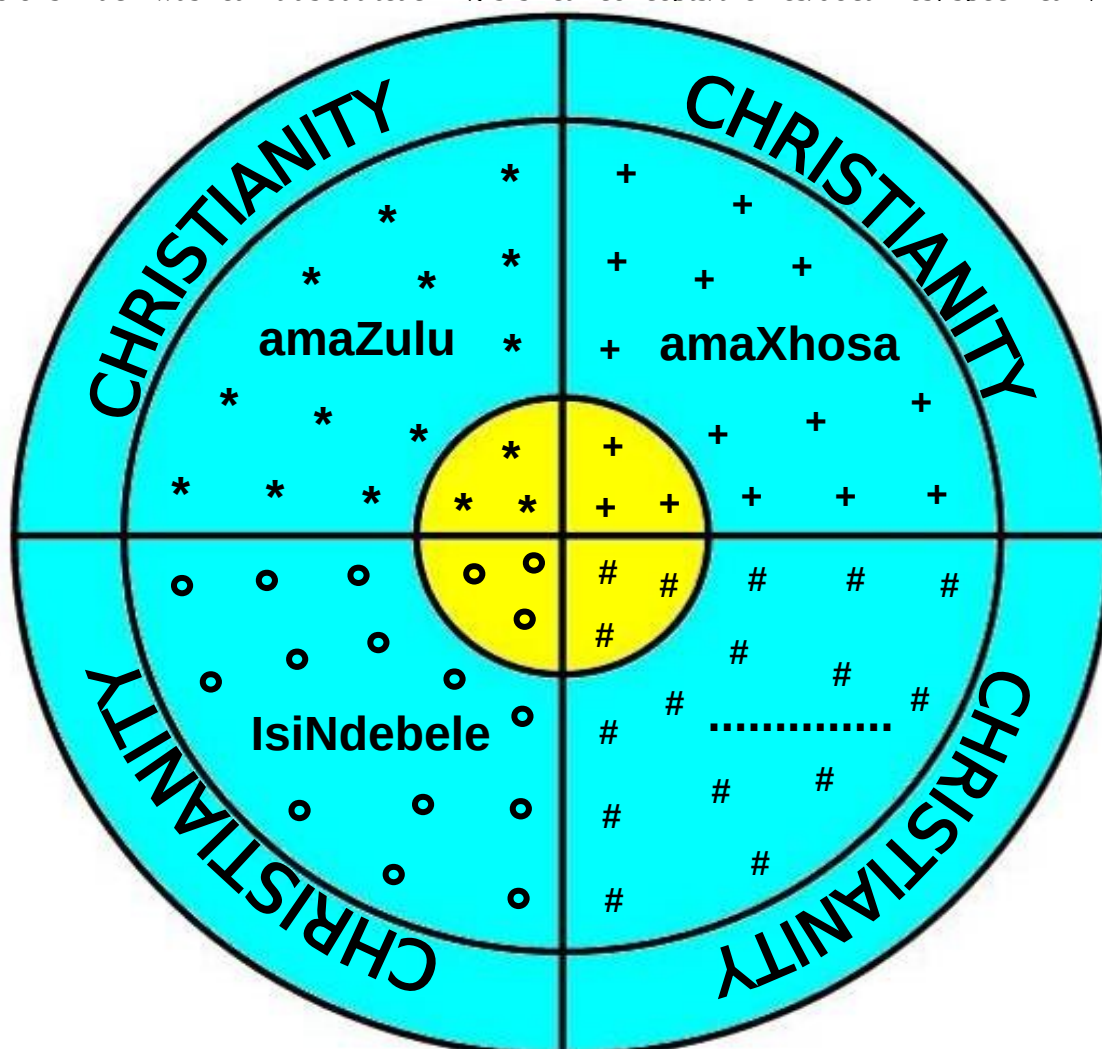
Due to the writer's and his black students' mutual transparency and openness, mutual cultural respect, mutual acceptance and mutual understanding, the writer's training became a more relevant to the African context and more fruitful, satisfying and rewarding. This was especially so in how to pastorally approach the issue of syncretism, so central to efficacious discipleship of converts to Christ on the African continent.

##### 5.4.1 Use of illustrations

The writer taught the course *The New Testament and Social Identity*. During the teaching sessions much was learnt about teaching biblical concepts/themes/doctrines, specifically with

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The inner circular band or sphere represents the part of the convert's culture that must go because incompatible with Christianity. The next concentric band covers all those aspects of one's worldview and culture that remain after conversion. The outer band represents the fact that Christians in every culture experience the same Christianity. It also represents the fact that when Christians from different cultures encounter one another it is Christ that should be seen before their cultures. The middle and outer bands are the same colour to show that those aspects of the worldview and culture that remain after conversion get refined and enriched by Christianity; and that Christ is seen through the culture. This diagram was found incredibly successful in showing the students that their African cultural identity remains – hence the middle band is much bigger than the inner band. It also helped them visualize how syncretism results – they got a better handle on it.

#### 5.4.2 Understanding the relationship between worldview and culture

The writer is aware that black students know the African traditional beliefs and customs from firsthand experience. However, he found that they had not thought systematically, deeply and critically about these matters. They discover in the above course for the first time what worldview is and how it relates to culture (in more recent years another course was introduced that also facilitates this understanding). It had never occurred to them that the main reason for black Christians usually battling with syncretism – sometimes only periodically or for a short period after conversion – was their ignorance of the power of worldview in a culture and the need for worldview change. Most black Christians who have abandoned syncretism are surprised when fellow African Christians partake in ATR practices that cannot be harmonized with the Gospel. They just think it should not happen and simply tell the guilty party that this is wrong. They clearly think cultural practices can be easily discarded. The light dawns when it is explained that it is because the worldview has not been successfully adjusted to the

Christian worldview that the necessary cultural changes are not permanent. They then appreciate that ‘devoting too much attention to the outer layers of culture and not enough attention to its inner core or worldview’ does not prevent (Hesselgrave 2006:76).

#### 5.4.3 Handling syncretism as sin

The writer (see above) spent time trying to enter into the black students’ cultural world in order to appreciate the pressure to commit syncretism from within the person and without (i.e. from the community) when a crisis is faced. This is especially so if the crisis is not resolved satisfactorily by Christian methods and ATR apparently offers a workable solution. Just like any sinful temptation works, there is the first phase of temptation to syncretism which is usually easily countered. But as friends and family continually put this temptation before the one in crisis or great need, the temptation becomes stronger. Finally there is the giving in to the temptation and committing sin of unfaithfulness to Christ in syncretism. The stages of temptation in the case of syncretism do not seem to be well understood by many African pastors and other black and white Christians. The writer has found that when they are understood a stronger spiritual preparedness and defense is built up. It also means that when the Christian succumbs to temptation to syncretism, this sin can be treated as any other sin, namely through confession, repentance and receiving God’s forgiveness. But this approach only works when the person fully grasps why syncretism is a sin.

#### 5.4.4 Teaching the causes, purposes and treatment of illnesses, needs, trials, sufferings, crises and death

One other very important pastoral strategy in overcoming syncretism is to take the convert through every possible biblical *cause* of illness, need, trial, crisis and death; and then to cover every possible *reason* or *purpose* for them, e.g. testing one’s spiritual maturity, faith and faithfulness to Christ, discipline, chastisement, strengthening and to learn perseverance in the Christian faith, especially when Satan attacks, refinement, righteousness, repentance, and to experience the reality of divine and fellow Christians’ comfort. Finally, the biblical *solutions* and *responses* need thorough treatment. More than just giving these lists and a short once-off teaching session on them, each item on the lists needs to be patiently and prayerfully explored together. If the convert has any doubts, questions or lack of knowledge about causes of, purposes/reasons for and solutions and approaches to illness, Satanic onslaught, crises, trials, loss or need, the ATR framework, the most familiar to the convert, is brought into service and syncretism results.

#### 5.4.5 Teaching for transformation



The writer dreamed up the following illustration, which he found most helpful in bringing the importance of repeated sessions on the issues touched on in Section 5.4.4. Imagine being asked to teach a young man to drive his recently bought car. You arrive with a sheet of explanations and directions clearly set out, covering the function of each relevant part involved in driving a car and how the driver is to operate and co-ordinate them in the driving act. After carefully and patiently going through the items on the sheet while sitting in the car, and after the student tells you he understands everything you have explained, you leave your student convinced your excellent session is all that is needed to get your student driving. Three months later you bump into the person. To your disappointment you find that after you left he tried a few times to apply your teaching but unsuccessfully. After your student had admitted defeat he decided to resort again to public transport which had worked well for him before purchasing a car. The student had initially kept the car hoping to succeed in his quest to get a driver's license. But since it had become obvious he would never be able to drive he had sold the car and resorted to catching taxis. The writer's students quickly caught the meaning of the story, namely that one's pastoral teaching is not complete until there has been more than just understanding and demonstration, but also repeated practice in applying biblical truths practically under the tutor's supervision. Only then will the black convert continue live within the Christian worldview and not revert back to ATR (cf the learner reverting back to his previous method of transport in the illustration). The whole process of mentoring needs to be followed with new converts: the mentor demonstrates or models a number of times lifestyle behaviour or specific ministry to be learnt by the mentee; the mentee then helps the mentor in his/her performance with much discussion to clarify details and discuss the mentee's mistakes; now the mentee performs the ministry a number of times under the supervision of the mentor with constructive feedback; the mentee then does the ministry on his/her own and reports back to the mentor for helpful comments and encouragement to continue growing in this ministry; and finally the mentee becomes a mentor with his/her own mentee and the process starts all over again (cf Gangel and Wilhoit 1993:315-319). It is obvious that this mentoring process responsibly carried out will eventually produce Christians competent in Christian living and service, but sadly mentoring is a rarity in most churches. It should be part of the discipleship of new converts to ensure their rooting in the Christian faith and concomitant lifestyle in the church and also in the world.

#### 5.4.6 Applicability of 1 Corinthians 8-10 and Romans 14:1-15:13

The writer has thought much about the relevance to the African church of the early church's handling of the issue of eating meat offered to idols and the patience and acceptance the

stronger Christian needs to display with the weaker Christian. Brown (2000:15-16) does see a connection between eating meat offered to idols and eating meat offered to ancestors. This would mean the stronger Christian may eat meat offered to ancestors because he/she believes that though the ancestors are treated as gods in practice, they are not gods. However, the stronger Christian would not attend a traditional ceremony where animals are sacrificed and eaten because of believing that demons are active and being unconsciously honoured at these occasions. The weaker Christians would be those who do not eat meat offered to ancestors because they believe they are real gods because they confuse the demons' power behind the ancestral cult with the ancestors' power. These weaker Christians should not then be judged by the stronger Christians and forced into eating meat sacrificed to ancestors. The church then would patiently wait for the weaker Christian to become a stronger Christian in the matter of eating meat or drinking traditional beer that has been offered to the ancestors.

#### 5.4.7 Applicability of Philippians 3:15

There is another scenario to consider. What about those Christians who do not believe the ancestors are impersonations of Satan and genuinely believe they play a subsidiary intermediary role alongside Christ but are not gods? Bongani, referred to above, initially held this belief and was adamant that his African identity implied acceptance of African culture, which included the ancestral cult. Therefore as an African, though a Christian, he felt obliged to continue to participate in the ancestral cult where necessary. He battled to see why white Christians had a problem with his position as he felt they retained their culture after conversion, and therefore he should be permitted to do the same. So he did not see this position as contradicting Christianity. Could this situation be considered in terms of Philippians 3:15-16?: 'All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.' If Bongani's initial stance does not contradict any central Christian doctrine, which it appears not to, this Philippians' passage could well be applicable. Further, the biblical evidence against the possibility of or absence of any ancestor activity among the living has been shown not to be watertight, even though the living believers are not to try to initiate any contact with them. The writer has found that teaching Christ as superior to and the fulfilment and perfection of African ancestors and animal sacrifices offered to them, is a most effective way to handle the questions of ancestors and Christianity. Also, when he teaches that the African identity remains even after the changes which Christianity requires have been instituted, it is easier for African converts to embrace all Christian doctrine and work successfully through the vestiges of the ancestral cult after conversion. The writer does not tackle the ancestral cult head-on

during evangelism and the early stages in discipleship as this approach is less helpful. Allowing for the use of the stronger-weaker Christian dichotomy (see above) and for further growth to wean the convert of the ancestral cult (see above), evangelism and discipleship are made easier and more effective. This is not viewed by the writer as watering down the cost of following Christ.

#### 5.4.8 Rev Andile Mbete's story

The story of the Rev Andile Mbete provides an opportunity to see how the dissertation would be used as an instrument for evaluating his struggles with how far syncretism should be permitted and plotting the way forward. It is told in a booklet, *Ibuyambo. A Pilgrimage towards a Spirituality Cooked in African Pots (2006)*. Mbete is an ordained minister of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, formerly a bishop. He is from the amaBhele clan, which is part of a group known as the amaMfengu, who originated in KwaZulu Natal and settled in Xhosa territory more than 170 years ago when they fled from the Zulu king Shaka. King Hintsa of the amaXhosa welcomed them and encouraged them to marry their daughters (:10). Mbete's great grandfather with about 16 000 amaMfengu members were persuaded by the Rev John Ayliff of the Wesleyan Church to settle with him in white settler territory to act as a buffer between the settlers and the amaXhosa foe (:11). For this service they 'were given grants of land which formerly belonged to the amaXhosa' (:11). On 14 May 1854 the amaMfengu were made by Ayliff to take a vow 'to serve the Lord Almighty, obey the government of the day and educate their children' (:11). Mbete's great grandfather and young bride settled at Healdtown, a Wesleyan mission station, which 'soon became an education centre and a base for converting *amaMfengu* to Christianity' (:11). Mbete's grandfather and wife 'embraced Christianity and they vigorously rejected "heathen" customs under the strong supervision and manipulation of the Wesleyan Missionaries at Healdtown' and 'joined a group of Africans who were regarded as something apart from and above the "pagans" ' (:12). '... the missionaries not only converted the Africans but also redefined their character, their body, customs, and indeed their entire African society in terms of negative stereotypes which supported domination and dispossession' (:12). The missionaries generally believed 'that the Africans were not only without knowledge of God but that their beliefs and customs were evil' (:13). This caused a major cleavage 'between the so-called "school" people ... and the "Red" traditionalists'. The new Christian converts were known as the *amagqobhoka* and also by other names (:13). Mbete grew up in eLudiza (Willowvale) where there were very few Christians. The rest followed traditional African customs. He states that his parents 'took it upon themselves to protect us from the practices which they viewed as "heathen customs" ...

It is fair to say that I grew up lonely and isolated from the rest of the children in our community' (:16). Mbete and his siblings were given African names. He mentions that in their church 'the pictures of God, the Angels and Jesus were always white and those of Satan and demons were black' (:18). As a result of his upbringing his young mind was imprinted with 'the notion that my African culture was somehow ungodly and evil, and that my struggle was to run away from my social environment if I wanted to live a life of faith in God' (:19). He mentions that the church songs were 'un-African' (:20). Because he grew up in a traditional African community he had from the days of his youth 'begun to understand and internalize the inner dynamics of the *amaXhosa* ways of life and world-view', especially the love of music and dancing (:21). As he grew older he 'began to wonder why the God we worshipped could not appreciate the wonderful singing and dancing of my own people' (:21). At and subsequent to his conversion he received 'a new self-identity. And herein lies my dilemma and that of many African fellow Christians' (:22-23). The dilemma was whether conversion implied a separation (divorce) 'from the heritage of my Africanness' (:23).

Mbete tells of his practice of periodically visiting the family kraal where his and his eldest son's pre-circumcision and post-circumcision rites were conducted and where his young bride was received into his family (:24). At these times he feels 'united spiritually with my immediate ancestors ... and through them with the patriarchs of the [his] *amaBhele* clan' (:24). He states that he has observed 'that a majority of African Christians live on two unreconciled levels. They remain attached to their traditional religion and cultural systems and therefore do not always pursue their "new faith" within the bounds of missionary orthodoxy' (:25). Mbete says that it is impossible for an African to live divorced from his/her Africanness (languages, customs, philosophies and beliefs), and to try to do so puts him/her 'in an impossible situation' (:25).

Mbete then describes the details and impact of the Cleansing and Thanksgiving Ceremony held at the Umbhashe River on Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 March 2003. It was the culmination of a number of similar dreams interpreted as a warning from the ancestors that they were angry with the people for not being more grateful 'for their hard-earned freedom' and unless something was done their freedom would be 'taken away' by the ancestors (:26-27). The following people were present: 'Premier of the Eastern Cape, the Rev M A Stofile, traditional leaders, sangomas and faith healers. President Thabo Mbeki was represented by the honorable Minister Stella Sigcawu, and former President, Dr Nelson Mandela joined the ceremony later to give a short message of support' (:27). There were also Christian leaders from the AICs and establishment churches. The communication 'with the invisible world was

divided into two forms: the traditional approach and the Christian way of doing things' (:27). The song *Masiye Mbo* was sung repeatedly. It is about going back to the African origins (ATR). At the River Bishop Mdudo 'started introducing himself to the ancestral spirits', and the Xhosa King Sandile, Chief Matanzima and Rev Stofile did likewise (:29). Each introduction was followed by the crowd's response of *Camagu*, which means 'have mercy upon us' (:29). He notes that there was no worship of the ancestors and there was 'a speaking to them, a telling them everything' (:29). Bishop Mdudo stated their freedom was both a blessing and an inflictor of wounds, mainly 'crime, rape, corruption and HIV-Aids' (:29). Mdudo asked the ancestors to inform them of reasons for South Africa's illness, the kind of illness, the prognosis and the treatment that would enable the land to get better (:29). The Bishop ended with the following statement: 'I salute the ancestral spirits in their respective status in ranks. I salute all those gathered here by the will of God. ... We say to the ancestral forces and to God Almighty, heal our land' (:29-30). Then King Sandile led the ceremony of the sacrifice of an ox donated by Nelson Mandela. Later small grass baskets containing sorghum, tobacco, pumpkin or wheat seeds, white beads and a calabash of beer were placed in the river and floated away and sank in the centre of the river during which 'the officiate called on the group of the ancestral fore-bears to come and partake of the feast' (:30). Then more cattle were slaughtered and people ate according to their hierarchical status and traditional beer was also served adding 'joy to both locals and visitors' (30).

The climax of the worship 'was when ten young girls, who were still virgins, entered the tent carrying water drawn from the umbhashe River for use by the clergy to symbolically cleanse the worshippers and the nation. 'At that moment, one was moved to see the Umbhashe dream expressed through word, song, clapping, and dance in the context of a Christian service' (:33). Mbete notes that at the ceremony 'the people adored the spirits of their ancestors, and they petitioned them for rain, abundant harvest, good health and a friendly reception among them after death' (:33-34). For the people present 'The *Ithongo* experience [calling from the ancestral world usually through dreams] has become, for them, the embodiment of both Christian and ancestral forces' (:34). Mbete marveled at how African Christians can 'move easily between ancestral veneration and worshipping God' and concludes that for them there 'is no dividing line in the minds of the worshippers between what is "African" and what is "Christian" ' (:33).

The decision to take part in the Umbhashe ceremony 'nearly split the Council of Churches in the Eastern Cape' (:31). Mbete reflected after the ceremony on the question, "What has Christ to do with ancestors?" (:31).

Mbete's booklet has reaffirmed the dissertation's finding that primary (cultural) identity is a central contributory factor to identity formation. It shows that it is unnatural, confusing, hurtful and impossible to have to deny one's primary identity. The dissertation has also demonstrated that though Christian conversion brings a new supra identity that overarches the primary identity, the primary identity must essentially remain. No African Christian should ever be ashamed of being African. However, the dissertation has demonstrated that those human traditions contrary to the Gospel must go, as nothing must undermine or confuse Christ's salvific role and preeminence and supreme Lordship in the Christian's life. This is to ensure one does not end up with another Gospel (really no Gospel) or stifled spiritual growth. If such loyalty to Christ is costly, the cost must be gratefully borne.

Mbete had reached almost fifty years of age by the time he first encountered the ancestral cult firsthand at the Thanksgiving and Cleansing Ceremony. It was thus never part of his enculturation and therefore was not really part of his primary identity. It seems the Umbhashe experience was partly about Mbete attempting to experience oneness with his fellow traditional Africans by being open to the traditional view and experience of the ancestors. Obviously being surrounded by African professing Christians participating apparently meaningfully in ancestral veneration with its belief in the custodian-disciplinary role of the ancestors with regard to the living would make the merger of Christianity and ATR seem more justifiable and certainly harmless. Naturally Mbete would be wondering if he was missing out by not opting for Christ and the ancestors.

The dissertation has argued for a narrower and also broader (through Gospel additions) view of Africanness that embraces the full range of distinctive African ways, except those that cannot be harmonized with the Gospel even when altered, but with these traditions now enriched by Christian virtues, values and the new focus, namely Christ, of the Christian life. Thus if an African Christian believes the ancestral cult compromises his more important Christian identity, it means that the cult actually detracts from his humanity and true Africanness; and thus he should have no identity crisis over abstaining from involvement in it. Loyalty to Christ rather than to human traditions and people brings more fulfillment and satisfaction, not less.

What the Umbhashe ceremony clearly depicts is that the ancestors are effectively treated as God. The problems in the new South Africa, as in any other country, stem from sin against God's inner (conscience) and written law (the Scriptures). It is against God ultimately and not the ancestors that we have sinned. It is God's displeasure and anger that is crucial and with which we need to be concerned. There is no teaching in the Scriptures about receiving

cleansing from the ancestors. There was every reason therefore for the Umbhashe ceremony to have dealt only with God.

This dissertation has shown the strong possibility that the ancestral cult is not all it is made out to be, and that there is no biblical warrant at all for it in Africa or any other part of the world. Further, its many negative influences on personal, social and economic development have been catalogued. The writer thus views the traditional aspects of the Umbhashe ceremony negatively, especially as he feels it must have been offensive to God to appeal to him alongside the ancestors as if they are on the same level. Even if it is claimed that this is a wrong inference, it still has to be faced that the cult is not part of Christianity. The writer therefore believes it cannot have God's blessing, but rather only his disfavour. Further, it detracts from the preeminence and Lordship of Christ and his role of protector and benefactor and judge of his church.

Evangelicals would consider Mbete an example of African church leaders lacking in spiritual discernment, spiritual maturity and spiritual leadership. They also feel he has failed to appreciate the fact that when a Westerner becomes a Christian he has to reject the heart of his/her culture, namely materialism, self-centredness, selfishness, individualism, sexual immorality and in many cases atheism. All of these have shaped Western identity. The new Christian supra-identity is so strong that if compromised there would be a major identity crisis and unhappiness, but far less than if syncretism were practised. To offer a Christian hope of greater inner peace, fulfilment and identity clarity through syncretism is a false hope. A true Christian is first and foremost a Christian – a member of the new humanity, just as an unbeliever is firstly part of the fallen human race. Just as nothing should be attempted that undermines the non-Christian's humanity, so similarly nothing should be pursued that undermines the Christian's new humanity in Christ. The Christian is no longer in Adam but in Christ. He cannot but start from this position. Chapter 5 showed how the new identity in Christ is radically different to the pre-conversion identity. Further, anything in one's culture that threatens or compromises one's Christian identity is subtracting from one's humanity and is therefore not worthy of being part of one's culture. In other words, one is doing one's fellow blacks a disservice in advocating beliefs, rituals and customs that contradict the Gospel. For the African Christian his/her Christian identity is central and overarches all other identities and will dictate what aspects of the cultural identity need modification in order for the Christian identity not to be undermined. When this is achieved the writer firmly believes the African can safely conclude that his/her Africanness has been purged and enriched and enjoy identity peace and unity. If there is any form of persecution for such a position then the

African Christian should willingly and for the sake of Christ endure it. There is no greater identity unhappiness for the believer than to be unfaithful to Christ. The writer has also argued that a drastic modification of the ancestral cult does not undermine the other myriad aspects of African culture. The African evangelical Christian is still African irrespective of what other blacks may say. The writer believes that if discipleship is conducted thoroughly and contextually, the African Christian will not experience a divided identity or a feeling of loss or shame for being African.

Mbete's story certainly confirms that ATR has to be reckoned with. But the writer feels the dissertation points the way to engage the matter that prompted Mbete to write his booklet, captured in the model summarized and set out below.

## **6. A model of discipleship for evangelical churches in Africa**

The following model emerges from and builds on all that has preceded. It will be presented in terms of a number of principles and steps that need to be applied in the discipleship process if discipleship is to produce mature Christians in Africa resistant to syncretism.

6.1 Evangelistic methods should be compatible with a high view of Scripture, sin, the role of the Holy Spirit, the new birth in conversion, and the fact that the similarities between Christianity and ATR make profession of faith easy under pressure from the evangelist, especially as he/she is an authority figure, especially if elderly, and because he/she is the equivalent to the ATR authoritative specialist practitioners. This will help prevent pseudo conversions, the subjects of which cannot be successfully discipled as they are still unconverted, no matter how outwardly sympathetic to the Christian faith they might appear to be. Precious time is wasted and crushing disappointments are suffered when trying to disciple these people. It needs to be remembered that a supernatural new birth is what makes the acceptance of and enculturation in the Christian worldview and lifestyle possible. The new birth is synonymous with one's natural birth from which point one's culture is easily learnt and permanently embraced. The writer has found that those of his students who clearly had experienced spiritual new birth most successfully made the transition to the Christian worldview. However, the writer has observed that this does not mean there will be no future temptation to syncretism (cf Thembanani above). Every possible use of African religion, idioms, and culture (and language) should be used where necessary to facilitate understanding of the Gospel. This is to apply throughout the discipleship process.



- 6.2 All training should as far as possible take into account whether the converts are literate or still at the oral or functionally illiterate stage and be adapted accordingly.
- 6.3 A study of the first century church to show that conversion to Christ did not mean Gentiles had to convert to Hebrew culture. The implication should be stressed, namely that African converts need not and should not try to convert to Western or any other culture.
- 6.4 Demonstrate and stress that because one's identity is linked directly to one's culture, it is harmful to African identity if an African convert does not continue to live within his/her African culture. Therefore converts must not be encouraged to attempt to become Westerners.
- 6.5 Show that a narrower definition of 'African' is necessary in order to avoid aspects of ATR incompatible with Christianity, but that this strengthens rather than weakens African identity because the Gospel purifies and enriches one's humanity and culture. It needs to be remembered that a united, unconfused and strong primary (cultural) identity means self-acceptance, self-confidence, self-respect, and self-pride (not sinful pride), which are necessary for significant personal growth (mental, spiritual, psychological, in one's career or vocation) which are prerequisites for broad-based social and economic development. It needs to be emphasized that an African convert is to be unashamedly and proudly African.
- 6.6 A study of key Christian doctrines, including the spirit world, and ATR, in order to appreciate the similarities and differences between these Christian doctrines and ATR. Some areas of this study are to receive more detailed coverage later in the discipleship programme. Then a presentation of Christianity as variously correction, continuation, fulfilment, interpretation and advancement of ATR.
- 6.7 A study of how the Gospel relates to all areas of life as ATR does. It needs stressing that no part of life is to be left untouched by the Christian faith – Christ is Lord of all.
- 6.8 Presentation of the meaning of syncretism and why it is to be avoided.
- 6.9 A study of worldview and culture and how they relate to each other. This study should include the role of culture (every culture serves the same purpose), why there are so many cultures (e.g. different climates, geographical regions, and worldviews), and that all cultures have good and bad elements.
- 6.10 A consideration of the need to change the parts of the African worldview that clashes with Christianity's worldview in order to bring about the necessary long-term changes in the culture to avoid syncretism.

- 6.11 A study and critique of modernism, postmodernism (if relevant), and religious pluralism.
- 6.12 A study of how the Bible explains illness and diseases. This should cover all possible sources/causes, reasons/purposes and treatments. This should also deal with demonic-induced illness, as through curses for instance. Failure to provide this important teaching would open the door to using ATR methods of diagnosis and treatment not permitted by Christianity.
- 6.13 A more detailed study of the ancestors from both an ATR and Christian perspective. In African life the ancestors are highly significant and therefore dare not be ignored in discipleship in evangelical churches. Here, perhaps more than in any other area of ATR, it needs to be shown that Christianity corrects, advances and fulfils ATR. White evangelical pastors in African churches or white leaders who visit Africa occasionally for ministry have generally failed in this area. This failure is the greatest cause of syncretism.
- 6.14 Sensitive handling of genuine Christians in evangelical black churches when they return (usually secretly and occasionally) to traditional beliefs and practices incompatible with Christianity. A wise, caring, and patient pastoral approach is the most helpful. This pastoral ministry should take cognition of the weak and strong Christian at the Corinthian church in connection with eating meat offered to idols, and/or Philippians 3:15-16. In both these approaches ancestral beliefs are not treated as sin, but rather as immaturity to be overcome.
- 6.15 Teach and demonstrate from a Christian perspective how to deal with demonic attacks, so that resorting to traditional methods contrary to Christianity is seen as unnecessary and also as out of bounds for the evangelical. White leaders are usually inexperienced here, so the help of an African pastor in demonstrating spiritual warfare is necessary. Failure here means converts will feel compelled to resort to traditional methods of deliverance and protection. This area has been most neglected by white leaders in African churches, colleges and seminaries, which has precipitated syncretism. Much can be learned from the AICs about spiritual warfare in the African context.
- 6.16 A study of how to biblically explain so-called bad luck, misfortune, unemployment, family problems, infertility, retrenchment, liquidation, poverty, war, death and other similar problems. Since in ATR there is always an ultimate cause in the spirit world for these experiences, it is important, as with illness, to have biblical answers concerning them, otherwise there will be temptation to syncretism.

- 6.17 A presentation on how evangelicals in Africa and in the first world can minister to each other so that both groups are spiritually edified and genuine material needs met.
- 6.18 A study of holistic ministry. The Gospel ministers to the whole person in his/her whole context and to the whole world and therefore good discipleship should lead to such ministry, which often will involve countering unrighteousness and injustice in society or in government. In Africa where there are so many physical needs due to poverty, joblessness, war, no electricity, inadequate housing and medical care, crime, and many other problems, evangelicals need to discover how Christianity is to be made relevant in such situations. Evangelicals need to train converts in holistic ministry, not just in biblical knowledge and church fellowship.
- 6.19 A study and application of a theology of work and development. For instance, it would include the biblical teaching that God rebukes the sin of laziness because it undermines the value of work, takes away human dignity and leads to poverty. Such a theology is necessary to understand work and development in relation to God's creation ordinance – what God expects one's work to achieve and where one's natural and spiritual gifts and wider personal development fit in. A theology of work and development is the only catalyst to generate hope in a context of poverty and hopelessness. A theology of development will speak to the matter of entitlement and human rights and responsibilities.
- 6.20 The above nineteen principles and action steps have emerged from the dissertation. Together they constitute a model for discipleship of converts in African evangelical churches. The model seems formidable. The sheer size of the needs of Christians and non-Christians in Africa requires that this model and other supplementary models for the evangelical churches in Africa be taken seriously and applied, even if initially only in limited and bumbling ways. It is the writer's hope that some qualified, willing and visionary leaders in the evangelical community in Africa will take up the challenge of creating a five-year, graded discipleship program built on this new model and other available models. Such a course would facilitate a more relevant and successful discipleship of converts. Africa waits!

## **Summary and Conclusion**

The need for this dissertation, as was noted in Chapter 1, became apparent after the writer had worked in theological education in the new South Africa for a number of years at the Bible Institute Eastern Cape. The Institute has a special focus on the training of current and future pastors of the African Independent/Initiated Churches. The early years at the Institute stimulated him to study the history of Africa, its African traditional religious core, and the current situation, especially in South Africa. He discovered from his studies and firsthand experience with hundreds of black Christians – pastors and laypeople – that the majority of blacks in Africa profess to be Christian, but generally lack spiritual maturity, are syncretistic, and exercise little or no influence on the continent, either spiritually, morally or in promoting social and economic development. Clearly something was drastically wrong in the huge African Church, including the evangelicals. The writer felt that the problem was largely located in faulty discipleship of converts to Christ. The dissertation has opened up areas where discipleship was lacking, clearly confirming that poor and inadequate discipleship of converts is without doubt a major contributory factor to the generally low spiritual and impotent level of the African Evangelical Church. The dissertation in exposing these discipleship shortfalls has pointed the way forward to solving this deficiency.

The first part of Chapter 2 presents the evangelical position because the writer as an evangelical writes from this theological perspective and because his audience for his research is the Evangelical Church in Africa. This does not mean that evangelicals are closed to other theological approaches to Scripture, the Gospel, Christian living, ATR, and development in Africa. There has been interaction with non-evangelical writers in the dissertation. The writer defended the evangelical stance as it was his point of departure. Further, this defense was necessitated as evangelicals exist in the midst of a wide and often hostile theological and philosophical spectrum, and because of ‘an absolute assurance in Jesus Christ as the only solution to the sin problem which is [believed to be] responsible for all human ills ...’ (Kato 1975:181). The section on evangelicalism and its defense showed that the evangelical position can be confidently held in the modern and postmodern worlds where radical religious pluralism is highly prized. The writer believes this section demonstrated that Christianity properly understood, taught, and experienced in every area of life, provides the best environment – one of love, peace and security – for humankind to flourish. Further, it was noted that the finality of biblical revelation means any teaching and/or practice that

undermines the Gospel is heresy. The danger of heresy resides in the evangelical belief that a diluted or mutilated Gospel is firstly powerless to save guilty sinners, and secondly that there is no other salvation – ‘Therefore apostasy from Christ means doom, for there is no other way’ (Ladd 1993:625). Hence syncretism that compromises the Gospel is strictly forbidden. This Chapter showed that the religious and philosophical world in which the convert lives, and the uniqueness, finality of the Gospel and its relevance to every area of the Christian’s life, make discipleship of evangelical converts extremely important. It seems that usually the focus in evangelical discipleship is on biblical teaching alone, without much, if any, reference to the world context of the convert and the danger of syncretism and heresy if the context is not studied, critiqued and purposely approached from a Christian standpoint. Chapter 2 demonstrated the relevance to discipleship in Africa (and any other part of the world) of modernism, postmodernism and pluralism.

Chapter 3 sketched the contours of ATR, with a section on the *amaXhosa* as the writer works primarily with Xhosa students. This Chapter presented the worldview and culture of ATR, and showed that they are alive throughout black Africa, including among the intelligentsia, and therefore to be reckoned with in evangelism and discipleship. The Chapter was necessary to make possible a thorough comparison between ATR and Christianity in Chapter 4 in order to clarify which aspects of ATR are and which are not incompatible with Christianity. This comparative exercise (Chapter 4) was vital to appreciate what kind of discipleship is necessary if syncretism is to be averted. Because the Gospel is to be applied to every area of the convert’s life, it is important in discipleship to clarify how the Gospel should impact all facets of the convert’s previous belief system and practices. This is particularly relevant in Africa as ATR impinges on every area of existence, which means areas left untouched by the Gospel will continue as before and often result in syncretism. Further, Chapter 3 was essential because without substantial knowledge of ATR the challenge facing discipleship in Africa will never be fully appreciated and the result will be inadequate discipleship and syncretism as the dissertation has demonstrated in many places. White Christian workers in Africa especially need Chapter 3 because of the paucity of their knowledge of ATR and how it impacts the adherents. This Chapter portrayed how important it is for Christian discipleship in Africa to be fully cognizant of ATR because of the challenges it presents to Christian growth.

Chapter 4 presented the central doctrines of Christianity in order to facilitate accurate comparison with comparable areas in ATR. Clearly the person conducting the discipleship of

converts needs to know these core truths if discipleship is to be soundly Christian. Failure here will also open the door to syncretism. The writer's experience has indicated that there is a major lack of solid teaching in discipleship in African churches, including many evangelical ones. This would explain the low moral level of Christians in general in Africa. This Chapter demonstrated how comprehensive Christianity is – that it should influence the whole thought realm and lifestyle of the convert – no segment of life is to be left untouched by the Gospel. Chapter 4 showed which elements in ATR can and which cannot be harmonised with the evangelical understanding of the key doctrines of Christianity. The Chapter also revealed how important it is to emphasize the similarities between ATR and Christianity and to find sensitive ways to handle and explain the differences, especially concerning ancestral beliefs. It was noted that the similarities provide a ready point of connection with ATR, which is a valuable tool in evangelism and also discipleship of converts. Noting the similarities shows that all ATR is not misleading and satanically inspired. To be told one's culture is all evil is deeply disturbing and painful and a huge obstacle to accepting the Christian faith. This Chapter demonstrated how Christianity can be viewed as a correction, but also a continuation, extension and fulfilment of ATR, another most helpful strategy in evangelism and discipleship. This involved taking general and special revelation seriously. General revelation and the Fall imply that ATR has both truth and error. Special revelation was needed to correct the distortions in ATR and supply the information and spiritual power general revelation cannot provide. 'Without special revelation he [every person] is ineffective and powerless to obey the moral law and find salvation' (Nicholls 1979:79). This Chapter also provided insight into why Christianity could spread so quickly in Africa and why syncretism has thrived in the African Church, which is vital knowledge for evangelism and discipleship. This Chapter exposed the pressing need for a comprehensive comparison of Christianity and ATR in discipleship in the African Evangelical Church.

Chapter 5 demonstrated that Christianity does not undermine or radically change one's culture (except where contradictory of key Christian doctrines). This is because Christianity can only be experienced fully and meaningfully in the convert's culture. It also showed the importance of one's culture for a healthy self-image and unconfused, confident personal identity, both necessary for spiritual, economic and any other development. Discipleship, therefore, should highlight the place of worldview and culture and their relation to identity and the Gospel, so that discipleship can be more effective. This means white leaders in the Evangelical Church in Africa should acknowledge 'the validity of other cultures [including ATR] and the richness they have to offer ...' (Hopler and Hopler 1993:140). This Chapter led to the conclusion that

the converted African Christian must be helped to retain his/her African identity, even though it has to be defined in a narrower sense to accommodate the avoidance of syncretism. In evangelism and discipleship it needs to be emphasized that the conversion of an African takes his/her humanity and his/her Africanness to a higher level. Chapter 5 demonstrated how significant the Christ-culture relationship is to discipleship in African evangelical churches. This is especially so in the light of Western cultural imperialism and the damage it has inflicted on African identity. The greatest challenge for the African Evangelical Church is to stand strong and unshaken in her African identity in the face of claims that evangelicals have forsaken their Africanness. Failure here, as the Chapter highlighted, will weaken the Church's spiritual power and impact on society.

Chapter 6 brought the conclusions of the previous Chapters together to further clarify the contours for discipleship of African converts in the African Evangelical Church. It also included some of the writer's experiences in many years of theological training of hundreds, possibly thousands, of black students, and further reflection on Africa. All this confirmed the importance of the themes raised in this dissertation relevant to effective discipleship in the African Church. The Chapter climaxed in the formulation of a discipleship model with nineteen sections. The main goal of the model is to ensure that the Gospel is contextually, relevantly, meaningfully and sufficiently applied to every area of the African convert's thought and practical life, against a background of modern, postmodern and pluralistic ideologies and ATR, in order to prevent syncretism, produce mature Christians and train converts in holistic ministry, so that a greater developmental impact is made on society as a whole. The Gospel is the Gospel of God's kingdom and Christians should seek its widest influence in the world.

The dissertation has dealt mostly with issues not normally thought to be relevant to discipleship of converts in evangelical churches in Africa. The writer believes that they are vitally pertinent to discipleship of African Christians and the dissertation has demonstrated this to be so. He is of the opinion that their neglect in evangelism and discipleship has played a major role in producing a generally weak and syncretistic Evangelical Church in Africa. It is the writer's burning wish that the discipleship model developed in this dissertation for evangelical African churches will help correct this situation so that new converts are brought to maturity so that the fast growing evangelical movement in Africa will be able to play the pivotal role that only it can play, firstly, in the spiritual and, secondly, the wider

transformation of the African continent. It goes without saying that the churches in the West and East require models specially suited to their contexts, shortcomings and needs. The continent of Africa has loads of potential for its countries to one day proudly be on a par with the other great nations of the world. This dissertation, the writer believes, would be most helpful for lecturers at Africa's evangelical colleges/ seminaries/ universities to inspire them to strive to better equip their students for effective discipleship ministry in their churches.

The dissertation is not intended to imply that the Evangelical Church in Africa is not attempting to train pastors capable of effective, contextual and holistic discipleship. The writer is also aware that many Christian leaders are serving God faithfully on the continent with the aim of a Spiritual/Moral Reformation and an African Renaissance. This dissertation has shown that the writer is totally supportive of those African church leaders in their vision, hope and endeavours under God to bring this about. But clearly there needs to be a massive drive to equip more pastors and future pastors with the skills necessary for discipleship of converts in Africa that lays a solid foundation for building mature Christians free of syncretism with a kingdom passion for Africa.

As noted in different places in the dissertation, Africa has suffered massive change, turmoil and trauma, particularly during the last two hundred years as the colonial tsunami swept across the continent, as new countries/nations consisting of 'plural populations' (Parker and Rathbone 2007:44) were indiscriminately forced on her, as Western (scientific) and African (pre-scientific) cultures encountered each other in an unfair contest, as Africa became a pawn in the cold war, as independence and post-independence wars were fought, as corrupt and incompetent African leaders enriched themselves and hijacked Africa's development, as droughts struck, as corruption raged in society, as urbanization exploded, as cultures were undermined, as HIV/AIDS spread like wild fire, as poverty became widespread, as globalization steadily and relentlessly progressed, and as the African identity was ruthlessly attacked. Africa has discovered that 'The enticing Western world is simultaneously a world that dominates and subjugates politically, economically and culturally' (Mana cited in Snyman 2008:106). The humiliation of a maligned, broken African identity and the heartache of crushed self-worth, have precipitated another humiliation: it has constituted 'within the African psyche an interpellation to rethink, to re-do and to redefine the African psyche' (Snyman 2008:107). To the above catalogue of Africa's hardships must be added the fact that Africa was not introduced gradually to modernity as happened in the West, and therefore has not had time to catch up. Further, the clock cannot be turned back. Africa is in a deep



dilemma and is crying out for a new future. Time and patience are running out. It is the writer's dream and prayer that the evangelical movement in Africa will yet through prayer and greater attention to a more holistic and appropriate discipleship model rise to the challenge of fighting the destructive giants of Africa through Spirit-filled lives and champion the principles of God's kingdom and its growth in society.

The writer is conscious that most non-Christians do not consider the Gospel as relevant to the world's suffering, heartaches, existential challenges and haunting traumas and tragedies. Sadly this position has been taken partly because of the church's many failures: hypocrisy, cold and loveless orthodoxy, internal conflicts, stifling and lifeless legalism, separatist cults that cripple and enslave the human spirit, cruel inquisitions and crusades. Some unbelievers even believe that most problems in the world are caused by Christianity and its supposedly mentally crippling, antiquated dogmas, damaging guilt, intolerance, pride, exclusiveness, failure to accept religious pluralism, and outdated moral standards. In a letter to the writer this belief is expressed: the correspondent speaking of his evangelical (very narrow though) upbringing states that it was 'soul-damaging, harmful, and positively dangerous.' He sees fundamentalism, where he lumps all evangelicals, as the greatest danger in the world. Walker (1992:11) says that evangelicals have often failed to express 'a divine love which touches people ... [in] their social and political existence.' The Apostle Paul teaches that in the worldwide church there should be 'equality' in the area of material provision (2 Cor 8:13-15). This ideal needs to be explored in both the Old and New Testaments and a strategy worked out to facilitate its achievement between churches in the first, second and third worlds, without paternalism and creating dependency as 2 Corinthians 8:14 implies. Such love would quickly melt the antagonism to the church and the belief that it is irrelevant and even injurious to the African situation. Christianity has not succeeded in living up to the claim that 'Africa's 'redemption' would come through conversion to Christianity' (Parker and Rathbone 2007:8). The problem is never with Christ, as noted in Chapter 4, but with his followers. Evangelicals in Africa and the rest of the world face the urgent challenge to live up to the Gospel in every area of their private and public lives. And discipleship is crucial if the Gospel's power is to be worked out in God's world in anticipation of and preparation for final redemption.

This dissertation has revealed that evangelicals have much unfinished business in Africa. 'Will it [the Church] imitate society by being just one more fragment in a mosaic of millions of disconnected pieces? Or will it be a model of unity, reconciliation and community in a desperately disjointed and lonely world?' (Hopler and Hopler 1993:157). The challenge to the evangelical churches in Africa is, through a new quality and highly relevant contextual

discipleship, to so minister that Africa has a foretaste of what Romans 8:20-21 describes: 'For the creation (read Africa) was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself (read Africa) will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (read Christians who are authentic Africans freed from all bondage to be all God wants them to be).'

The writer feels justified in saying that this dissertation is a contribution to the African Renaissance, but more importantly to an African Reformation.

Finally it needs to be said that the dissertation has opened up a myriad areas for further research. The writer hopes through his work at the South African Theological Seminary to help facilitate this needed research.

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