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Southern African Independent Churches Respond to Demonic Powers

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In this article the author penetrates the pagan cosmology of witchcraft, sorcery, spirit possession and ancestor wrath that underlies the African understanding of the healing processes from sickness and disease. The failure of the historic churches to understand this cosmology and the relationship between medicine and ritual practices has been one factor in the rapid growth of the African Independent churches which now number six million followers or thirty per cent of the Black population of South Africa. The challenge to contextualise the media of Christ's healing power remains to be met.

Editor

DISEASES AND THEIR CAUSES

In Africa in general a distinction is made between two types of diseases, namely those which could be classified as natural diseases (referred to in Zulu as *umkhuhlane*) and those which could really be 'understood' by Africans only in the context of their cosmology (referred to as *Ukufa Kwabantu*).

The former type of diseases such as ordinary colds, flu, or serious ailments are always presented in somatic symptoms. Behind these diseases are no malicious external factors which loom behind everything, nor are they the victim's fault. These diseases are treated with medicines which are considered to be in themselves effective and which need not be accompanied by any rituals. Traditional medicines p. 415 exist for such diseases. Such medicines can be thrown away without ill consequences if ineffective. They are not considered to have mysterious power in themselves.

The treatment of those diseases which are understood only within the African context (Zulu = *Ukufa Kwabantu*) such as witchcraft, sorcery, ancestor wrath, pollution, spirit-possession, or a disturbed relationship with one's surroundings can be treated effectively only when certain medicines are accompanied by specific rituals. About the mystical forces, Evans Pritchard states, 'The European does not appreciate that the Azande have to take into account mystical forces of which he (the European) knows nothing' (Marwick 1972: 329). The rites used in connection with healing of diseases that are typically African cannot really substitute for rites in the church unless made Christocentric and adapted. The main aim is to restore the disposition, the balance of the affected person in the context of his or her family and community. The person has been put into a disarranged, disturbed, disordered situation and this has to be rectified. The main aim of such a person's adversary is to either destroy him or to influence negatively his social equilibrium which results in all types of misfortune, ill-health, or even death.

Such imbalance has to be rectified and this is possible also through specific medicines and accompanying rituals. When the somatic symptoms are diagnosed as natural, they are treated separately which implies that no special rituals are applied. In the African context no separation is made between the physical and the psychical. Disturbed equilibrium is rectified by treating the whole person, by the holistic approach, and this is

done in conjunction with the supernatural forces which fall outside the ordinary rule of cause and effect. The main emphasis is to take out of the system what has a negative effect upon it and the cause could be often something not in the body, but somewhere in the surroundings or stealthily canalized on or into the body. Such ritualized objects have to be removed either from the surroundings or from the body and when successfully removed the person's health is restored. What is extracted remains dangerous and could be used against others (cf. Ngubane 1977).

WHO ARE THESE ADVERSE FORCES?

The forces of good and evil have special significance and are given special attention within the context of the African Indigenous Churches (AIC). Special reference will be made here to these churches which **P. 416** have grown from 9 percent (1950) to 18 percent (1960), to 29.3 percent (1980) of the African population in South Africa, i.e., from 800,000 in 1950 to six million adherents in 1980. Although they are fast-growing movements in some countries in the rest of Africa, nowhere have they grown the way they did in this country. There are a number of reasons for this growth: social and economic deprivation, a place to feel at home, and the contextualizing of Christianity to make it meaningful in this situation. Nowhere else has the office of prophet as healer been highlighted as in Southern Africa.

Within this movement are three main streams: the *Zionists*, influenced by the Christian Catholic Church in Zion (founded by Alexander Dowie in Chicago), which entered this country during the end of the last century; the *Ethiopian* stream which also started at the end of the last century and for whom Ethiopia was a symbol of freedom; and the *Apostolic* stream which entered this country from the USA during the first decade of this century. Zionists, more than the others, concentrate on healing and especially also on these 'diseases' which fall within the context of the indigenous cosmology, to free their members and adherents from adverse forces. Many of these first-century Christians are still deeply involved with aspects of traditional spirituality.

Moral evil depends on the attitudes, inherent tendencies, or behaviour of the individual which is the result of disregarding the generally accepted moral, prescriptions in daily life. These could be understood by a Westerner, but then there are the mystical types of evil which are effected by others, against a person. Here either witchcraft or sorcery is at work. Many Africans have real problems with these factors that are held responsible for misfortunes, illness, and death due to the evil intent of humans who use so-called black magic.

Bewitchment and sorcery lead to death and annihilation. They are seen as the destroyers of life, often through mysterious events and diseases. The witch works through some mystical power which is innate, inherited, or 'constitutionally implanted at an early age' (cf. Marwick 1972:12). A clear distinction should be made between witch and sorcerer. The former achieves her evil by some mystical power without magic and the latter by magic, referred to as black magic. Magic is a morally neutral term but may be used positively (white magic) or negatively (black magic). The former is usually the approach of the medicine man and the latter of the sorcerer. The sorcerer uses rituals and material substances with the aim of controlling mystic forces. Anyone, however, could obtain the *multi* (medicine) for acts of sorcery, i.e., if he or she is prepared to pay for it. As a result of envy **p. 417** and jealousy, usually in family relationships, sorcery or counter sorcery methods are used (Bührmann 1983:25). The sorcerer is a poisoner, and the victims often state that their crops or animals have been poisoned. It is the medicine man who solves these problems which are often the result of social conflict.

The problems encountered are explained in different ways. For example, the transition from a traditional to a new cultural environment, from an ontocratic culture to a secularized situation, is expressed through spirit-possession. Here the individual is in the centre and he believes that he is ill as a result of the influence of evil spirits. It is only by way of personal cleansing through exorcism that a person can get rid of these spirits. It is not so much the fact of the change from one culture to the other that brings stress, but stress is experienced because of the tensions in this change. The new culture is not in itself evil, but to change to the new brings stress. This is a major reason why in such situations the role of the diviner becomes more prominent. However, the tendency also exists to hark back to the traditional environment, to the old securities, and here witchcraft and communal cleansing become prominent (Schoffeleers 1982: 1–2, 11–12) (Lagewerf 1985: 1–62).

The role of medicine men has become more prominent, and they are often placed in the context of Christ, prophets, and ministers. They have increased and are no more frowned upon by the black intelligentsia as was the case a decade ago. Many Zionists consult them and some Zionist prophets also receive training as diviners. The AIC has a different disposition to African culture the historic churches, and these churches have taken healing seriously as being associated with religion. This has given prominence to the prophet or prayer healer. Those problems that were the task of the diviner to solve, such as sorcery, witchcraft, evil spirits, and spirit-possession, have to be taken seriously.

Spirit-possession reflects the human suffering involved in the transitional stage from the traditional microcosmic worldview to the macrocosmic worldview. The all pervasive influence of evil spirits on the minds of people affects their adaptation to the new situation, and for this reason, there is an emphasis on washing off evil, such as in the church which had at their Pentecost services in Clermont not less than ten thousand people from various parts of South Africa. At this occasion 1,439 were baptized (1,050 women, 389 men) and practiced *isiwasho* when thousands went through the baptismal pool from 9:00–11:30 a.m. on Sunday May 18, 1986, to wash off symbolically (symbol in the African sense) what is negative on them. p. 418

THE ANGUISH OF TRANSITION FROM TRADITIONAL TO MODERN CULTURES

A deep feeling prevails that Africa must get out of its slumber into the modern world (cf. Okot p' Bitek 1972). This highlights the despair which prevails among those who would like to see Africa moving to the front line of modern progress. However, there is in the modern man a lack of 'empathy,' which could be explained as a person's ability to identify new aspects of a changing environment and act accordingly (cf. Lerner 1958).

Which world must the traditional African escape? Africa's preoccupation with adverse mystical forces stems from frustration. In order to move away from the old type of economic existence, ego goals must develop within the context of common goals, personal responsibility is called for, and adaptation in the work situation is also necessary.

A distinction must be made between those black Africans who no longer have a third-world but a first-world outlook and the vast majority who are still either embedded or partly rooted in the third-world tradition. About 70 percent of Africa's black population is still unurbanized. From indifference to or rejection of Western culture, technology, and scientific development the tendency is now toward acceptance.

The secret of man's adaptation and progress in new situations is related to the fact that man is a whole; his whole life is affected when he enters a new situation, but the problem arises when what happens to him, is understood by only a part of him.

Development cannot take place in one isolated sphere of a human being's existence (Fromm 1979: 272). Emmanuel Milingo, the deposed Roman Catholic bishop of Lusaka, maintains that if Zambia wants to become truly modern, African, and religious, it has to rid itself of one of the major obstacles to modernization, namely the belief in evil spirits (cf. Schoffeleers 1982: 24). How can people develop away from the shackles of a worldview in which so much suspicion and jealousy prevail, which are often reflected in their beliefs in demons, evil spirits, spirit-possession, witchcraft, and sorcery? The solution should be examined 'in terms of transitions from magic to science, from myth to historical time, and from the closed, unitary or ontocratic society to the open plural society' (Turner: New Era).

Africa has to change; otherwise it will remain shackled to the thoughts about contra-forces being responsible for its situation. In traditional terms these forces are described in the form of evil spirits, demons, spirit-possession, sorcery, and witchcraft, but in modern terms the adversaries are still seen in terms of the evil forces of p.419 colonialism. Peter Enahoro, a leading African publisher and journalist in a monthly magazine, *Africa Now*, February 1985, mentioned that when Africa reflects on the quarter century of its independence the emphasis will be on 'imperialist exploiters who invaded our land. Nearly forgotten will be the great question: What has Africa done with its independence in 25 years? ... Should we not by now have progressed on the road to re-establishing our self-confidence?'

A deep-seated frustration is found in Africa because of its inability to adapt to the modern situation, and this has as a reaction a belief in the proliferation of the evil with its negative demonic forces. Adeney states that when a missionary or local church leader has to face issues concerning sorcery, he should 'check out the lines of tension in the local structure, probing for the sociological ingredients in the trauma' (Adeney 1974: 13, 394). The desire to accept the new situation brings forth numerous guilt feelings which are symbolized as evil spirits which want to counteract the new steps taken. Furthermore, the frustration stems from the low level of 'industrial mentality' which, according to a Nigerian systems engineer, is the greatest obstacle in Africa's industrial progress. He states:

Industrial mentality is a psychological orientation of the mind which puts the latter in adventurous frame within which the mind becomes truly the architect of its own future, deliberately designing its own trajectory of development and systematically 'conquering' obstacles confronting it in the process; the industrial mentality is the agency by which scientific and cultural development are deliberately projected into a technology for the satisfaction of apparent needs and industrial mentality is acquired by long exposure to and practice in practical industrial problem solving situations. (Anyiwo 1977)

Women, however, are greatly affected by the new situation, by the process of modernization, and this is evident in the fact that they find their refuge in the churches and especially in the indigenous churches, where many act as prayer persons and prophets. Many women are among those who feel at times possessed with evil spirits in their various forms. The other issue is the fact that there is still a strong group-consciousness in Africa which is also evident in the many small face-to-face church groups. Group-consciousness can be tyranny or security. In this approach the law of participation is very prominent; for example, everything and everyone can have a share in everything and everyone else. Here the group takes precedence over the individual. An isolated human being in Africa is an anomaly: 'I am only because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.' This interrelationship often stultifies innovation and the spirit of inquiry because tradition has all p. 420 the answers, and jealousy reigns where an individual in the group excels and such a person easily becomes the object of witchcraft and sorcery.

CONFLICT OF COSMOLOGIES

Traditional man is not surrounded by things but by beings. The world is not objectified as in the case of science but subjectified. The personality of life in Africa is important. The very humanity of a person depends on integration in the family, clan, or tribe. Self-conception becomes a projection of the group. The traditional group 'orientation' does not allow any challenges to the timeless status quo. Development implies creative unrest, the technoscientific disposition invokes a never-ending questioning of everything. All the acts from birth to death and the hereafter bind a person as a communal being to all around him. When disequilibrium is experienced in the community, the main task is to detect the enemy of social equilibrium and such an enemy has to be destroyed. The diviner has in this connection a special task.

Africa's concept of *time* must also be considered. Temporality is an aspect so fundamental and obvious in human existence that the concept of time is indispensable to interpret the world and people. Africa's emphasis on the past has affected its progress toward the future. When the centre of gravity is in the past, what happens in the present has to fit into the past; otherwise, it disturbs the harmonious relationship with those in the past, because the past is sacral. If this past is disturbed, the forces of evil are unleashed.

The new emphasis on the future dimension has led to social and political instability. A great misconception exists concerning the time aspect and its emphasis on the past, but also with regard to the recently discovered future. The future is something to work at. In the secularized world the mystery of the future predominates, and those come-of-age in the modern world have at their disposal unparalleled creative and transforming power. It took Europe nearly a thousand years to develop science and technology to what it is today. Too often it is expected that Africa will attain this development in a hundred years without real genuine preparation. This expectation should largely be put at the door of the colonial powers.

The attitude to *nature* itself also influences the world of supernatural forces. In traditional thinking, the earth is the symbol of the mother, which is one of the central themes in modern African literature. In Africa people have a personal relationship to nature. Nature does not consist of objects but is personal. In nature we find gigantic forces p. 421 —some adverse, some well disposed. In traditional Africa, the world is a mythical concept, whereas the Bible puts the world in the dimension of time and history (Gogarten 1953). Secularization made a break with the everlasting cycle of nature and ever presence of myth (van Leeuwen 1964: 331). Secularization brought freedom, making room for people among all the forces that bound them. They have been emancipated from the ontocratic concept of the universe, namely that it is full of beings some of which are continuously struggling to disturb the balance.

The Westerner's relationship to the earth is primarily a horizontal, pragmatic relationship, i.e., a rational relationship, while traditional Africa's relationship to it is primarily intuitive and emotional. Land for the Westerner is basically economic; for Africa the earth is a mother. So many forces, however, disturb the relationship with mother earth and have to be counteracted. It is evident that a worldview based on a primal religious outlook cannot as such incorporate ideas about nature, time and history, people and community which could be an integral part of modern development. Even Christianity in Africa has not played the role it did for Europe in connection with the development of that continent.

The traditional primal communities thus remain obstacles in the process of development, and this accounts for much of Africa's frustration and its inhibition by evil forces. What is evil and bad should be seen in terms of the community and not merely in

terms of personal and group morality. Where microcosmic boundaries are broken down and adaptation to a wider world takes place, this leads to changing social structural circumstances and a more universal outlook. Religion is an integral infrastructural aspect of the African community, which could not be said of capitalism, for example. But religion could stultify the dynamics of articulation, especially where evil forces still supposedly predominate.

Modernization leads in most traditional cultures to personal psychic stress, especially via the urban industrial institutions and patterns because of social disruption. Although some doubt that the urban milieu brings distress, tension, and insecurity, and thus personal disorientation, the South African black cities have proved what social disruption as a result of economic and political deprivation can lead to. Traditional and semitrade societies in the urban areas are not symbols of security and tranquility; they all experience tension, insecurity, and even fear of many unpredictable evil forces.

Many of the fears that haunt traditional Africa will be partly obliterated when the process of modernization becomes more [p. 422](#) effective and complete in Africa. This will include: a) openness to new experiences such as a new environment, different peoples; b) readiness for social change; c) allowance for differences of opinion without considering this to be a threat; d) time valued as an important commodity; e) planning seen as important; f) the replacement of the old fatalism with its emphasis on the looming dangers of evil forces such as bewitchment, sorcery, spirit-possession by the knowledge that such forces are either imaginary or can be controlled; g) a greater role played by educational and occupation aspirations; i) greater value placed on human dignity and rights (Inkles and Smith 1974: 20–25).

The present confusion, bewitchment, and suffering will last as long as there is insufficient basic training. In this country it will last as long as people have no horizons but are kept in ghettos because of a maladjusted educational system leading to sociopolitical discrimination.

RESPONSES OF AIC CHURCHES

It has already been indicated that human suffering is seen in the context of spiritual possession; that bewitchment and sorcery are considered to be major obstacles on the road to modernization; that we need to take these phenomena seriously as the Bible does; and that 'sin' should be seen within the African context as resulting in physical and psychical sickness and God, but also between persons in the family of the victim and such a person and community.

The movement to judge these phenomena in the light of the Bible is especially strong in the AIC. In the historic churches a schizophrenic attitude prevails: members pretend to uphold the stance of these churches but many believe in such forces and want to seek help where help is given outside these churches. Also in this regard the problems of the African have been ignored. The responses of Western-trained ministers of religion, Western-trained medical doctors, psychiatrists, and psychologist toward these phenomena are preconditioned or they simply ignore them. They are not in a position to give assistance in this regard. The unwillingness to give attention to traditional beliefs, religious practices and values, the interpersonal and social structures of the Africans at the Western-oriented hospitals have driven many African patients to their traditional healers where they are not things but persons with real problems which have to be understood within their cosmology. Now that African psychiatrists and psychologists, also pastoral psychologists, have come to the fore in many parts of Africa, there are determined attempts to understand better these [p. 423](#) phenomena, namely bewitchment, sorcery, and spirit-

possession. Although there may be disagreement about the potential harm in these issues, it is important to assess the effect they do have on people's health. Furthermore, the Bible does not conceal such issues as sorcery (cf. [Deut. 18:10](#); [2 Kgs. 17:17](#)). The AIC takes these issues seriously and offers pastoral care to victims with the result that it attracts many people, also from the 'historic' churches.

A vital concern in Africa is to retain the equilibrium in social relationships. Sorcery and witchcraft are considered to be antisocial evils that disturb social relations, because their source is so often jealousy within the extended family. They affect the health and the general well-being of the victim. In traditional society such relationships are restored through confession and some visible symbolic rituals which are performed to reconcile those whose relationships have been disturbed. Often this is the slaughtering of a black and a white chicken representing the guilty and offended party or merely the slaughtering of an animal.

Important in this procedure are symbolic acts. Although prayer is important, only a few AIC prophets (of those questioned) emphasized prayer. Prayer is necessary and it has value, but of vital importance is the concrete reconciliation with the person to whom a wrong has been done. Thus, reconciliation is necessary not only between the sick person and God but especially also between the guilty and the offended. Thus it is not a matter of prayer only. Confession of wrongs done takes place regularly in the AIC services, and mutual forgiveness is to them a significant part of reconciliation. Their face-to-face services do much in this regard. For the African sin is a concrete existential reality, and many Africans in the historic churches see sin and confession in the terms and symbols of traditional religion (cf. Nxumalo 1979: 29–30). The question of restoring relationships is a major task of the diviner and it is a major task of the prophet in the AIC. As was the case in the traditional society where the penitent has to seek reconciliation with its community, so, in the AIC with their revival services (*umvusilelo*), reconciliation is affected among themselves and with God. This is a regular process.

The ancestors are regularly brought into this procedure, and for most of the AIC prophets this is also the case. Of the prophets consulted, 84 percent said that the ancestors play a role in witchcraft, sorcery, and spirit-possession procedures. Those who fail to adhere to the taboos and injunctions of the hierarchy get sick, go insane, or even die. The reason for such transgressions is often given as sorcery or bewitchment. If these are removed, obedience will be restored. The problem is [p. 424](#) that the individual himself is then not held responsible, so that individual guilt is obscured. In Africa public confession is important, and this is one of the main features of AIC services. Much emphasis is put on relieving tensions due to unsocial behaviour. In certain cases the prophecies that expose individuals guilty of antisocial behavior can lead to ostracism. Wickedness could also be the mass reaction of a group which projects its destructive instincts on an individual who is considered to be undesirable and who gets the role of the scapegoat. Balz states: 'All human societies so far known have produced scapegoats in more or less barbaric ways, by killing or isolating people from human solidarity' (Balz 1984: 374).

CHRISTIANISING TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS

The main issue concerning purification rites in the African context is *fortification* against misfortune and the forces of evil. Because there are typical African diseases which the 'historic churches do not take into consideration, people are not in a position to fortify themselves against their onslaughts. They either go to the traditional diviners and herbalists or to their replacements within the AIC, namely the prayer healers, their ministers, or prophets. There they find additional means of protection beyond the

scriptural message that God cares, the prayers offered, and the sacraments given as in the historic churches. The sacrament of baptism as practised in these churches is found to be adequate, but in the AIC it has also become a purification rite.

Furthermore, the cords around the body, ankles, and neck, the vestments, the stars, the beads, the pieces of string around the wrists, candles, ashes—all these serve as protection against evil forces. Then the washings (*isiwasho*), vomitings (*palaza*), emetics are all used to wash off the negative ‘magic’ or get the evil forces out of the system. All these objects have ‘power’ which comes either from God, the Holy Spirit, or the ancestor spirits and which protects and purifies a person against the forces of evil. These protecting objects or cleansing actions are basically Christianized replacements of what is found in the traditional context. The mentioned objects in the AIC are protecting those who wear or use them against the evil spirits. In the AIC the emphasis is on protection and fortification, not on attacking the forces of evil as is the case within the traditional society. In the traditional society the evil when taken out could be restored to the evildoer. What is taken out and discarded could be used as a potent means against someone else or in retribution. The AIC do not act this way as will be p. 425 indicated later. They do not activate sickness in adversaries but only heal the victim.

Water as the symbol of life and healing from the effects of evil spirits plays a significant role in the exorcism practices of the AIC. The Roman Catholic Church’s *Collectio Rituum* has special reference to evil spirits in its blessing of the water which reads *inter alia*: ‘And instil into this element prepared by many cleansings the power of the blessing: Grant that this creature of thine, in the services of the mysteries, may effect the purpose of divine grace to banish all evil spirits and drive away diseases’ (*Collectio Rituum*, Durban, 1960: 163). The prayer continues to ask that houses, blessed with the blessed water, be freed from all uncleanness and delivered from all harm. ‘Let no noxious spirit remain there ...’ (ibid). When this attitude is observed by the African, the traditional practices and witchcraft are pushed into the background and there is not the temptation to seek the help of the diviner (cf. Nxumalo 1979: 35).

EXORCISM AS A HEALING PRACTICE

Exorcism is an important activity in AIC. It is now considered to be of importance to the pastoral ministry in the African context. It has been indicated above how social, economic, and political issues can lead to tensions and to maladjustment and to the belief in the omnipresence of evil forces or an evil force. This is part of the worldview of the traditional African.

Masamba ma Mpolo, a Baptist minister from Zaire, presently with the Department of Family Education of the World Council of Churches, states:

Beliefs in bewitchment are functional in as much as they are used as a channel through which people can deal with hate, hostility, frustration, jealousy, guilt, and sexual fantasies which are not culturally overtly expressed. Therapeutically, beliefs in bewitchment create social abreactions, thus preventing the formation of severe individual neurosis.... In general, the individual deals more easily with external than with internal dangers.... Aside from facilitating the discharge of aggression, in culturally accepted ways, beliefs in bewitchment serve another psychological function: they resolve ambivalent feelings which are encountered in the ambiguity of social relationships ... (cf. Masamba ma Mpolo 1984: 3, 150–151; (quoted by Lagerwerf 1985: 37).

Masamba ma Mpolo sees bewitchment as functional in various respects, namely, helping the individual psychologically to deal with his or her personality crisis and mistrust of the environment; through p. 426 bewitchment the person unconsciously

affirms his or her worth because this person makes claims for his or her identity. It is also related to the individual's psychosocial concern, i.e., as a means to affirm himself in the context of the social system of thought and relationships. Above all, it is a symbolic acting out of inner guilt feelings.

The Zionists strongly oppose sorcery which is to them a most hostile activity. They feel that they are not always fully accepted by the community and that traditional forces are used against them. Those who become marginal in their churches are considered to be the most susceptible to the adverse activities of evil forces. Only by devoting themselves fully to the demands of their church are members certain of protection and fortification against such negative attacks.

The counter elements used against the attacks of sorcerers are inner cleansing through drinking a mixture of seawater (or water with salt) and ashes. Praying together as a group, laying on the hands, hitting the person with the hands or 'holy' sticks are various methods used. Often these acts have been preceded by a revival service (*umvusilelo*).

In a survey of Soweto and around Durban of prophets/prayer healers in the Zionist churches, various replies were received concerning whom and how the typical ethnic diseases effected by sorcerers should be treated. A well-known leader of a Zionist church, who acts also as a prophet, maintains that *ufufunyane* (a kind of hysteria) caused by evil spirits, 'is caused by various "mixtures" used to get your brains off. Like a drunken person, the person's brains do not work. If pills are given by the doctor, then the brains come back. After this I give the person water over which I have prayed. The *umthandazi* can kill the disease.' One *umthandazi* (prayer healer) stated that the victim is given water blessed by her, and once the person drinks that water the *ufufunyane* (foreign evil spirits) get immediately out of the person 'because it does not want things that are blessed.' Another *umthandazi* stated that she mixes 'holy water' (i.e., water prayed over) with ash or salt or seawater and *impepho* (incense used to draw the attention of the ancestors). It is used for 'vomiting, purging, and steaming.' For the *ufufunyane*, the *umthandazi*, or *umprofeti* are recommended as healers as they 'can "see" ' and through praying, the *ufufunyane* will tell you 'how it came in and how it will get out'. Medicines are also used. It is not only prayer, but also certain ritual incisions that have to be observed.

In the case of *isliao* (food poisoning by a sorcerer), the prophets replied (as follows) to the question: 'Who should treat this disease? Why this person?' Five stated that the prayer healer should treat the p. 427 victim, three referred it to the herbalist (*inyanga*), one to the diviner (*isangoma*), and one maintained that the prayer healer, the diviner and the *inyanga* could treat it, but only one who referred to all these three included the Western doctor, which was also put as an option. None of these prayer healers referred only to prayer as a means of healing in this case. It has been stated by some of the prophets that a prophet has to 'see' which doctor should treat the victim. 'See' here refers to a special ability found also with the diviner in the traditional context. The prophet 'sees' because he or she is in contact with Holy Spirit and/or the ancestors. Some maintained that if the *isangoma* has learned about traditional medicine she or he may also be able to help, otherwise not. The prayer healer 'can give holy water (*isiwasho*) to take out the poison,' i.e., to vomit (*palaza*); she or he gets advice from the ancestor ('messenger') to help the suffering person. Another prayer healer stated: 'the prayer healer can chase away everything through God's spiritual power.'

Those who referred to herbalists as the best persons to refer the victim to maintained that they prepare the medicine (*muti*) for *idliso* victims and they are thus the best able to counteract or neutralize it—'they can also reverse the process through herbs.'

All stated this condition (*idliso*) is caused by medicine (*muti*) received from the herbalist (*inyanga*); it is ascribed to jealousy or hatred. One stated that 'as the name indicates ("*idliso*", to be made to eat),' a person eats something which has been mixed unawares with herbs.

ZIONIST REACTION TO SORCERY

It is clear that the treatment of various diseases that fall within the context of African cosmology is not based solely on prayer but also on specific ritual procedures. Zionists, however, strongly react against sorcery and they resist it vigorously, as Kiernan also points out elsewhere (cf. Kiernan 1985). It is an evil which has to be eradicated by all means, even though the assistance of a diviner is not frowned upon by a number of Zionist prayer healers and is, in fact, even encouraged. They do not create a witch-hunting atmosphere to discover the culprits, but they simply react against its influences which they believe to have negative effects. In this way they uphold the positive values of their church community in protecting and fortifying them against the negative attacks of sorcerers.

In Christianity, Satan, the devil, the great adversary, uses evil forces, p. 428 over which he has dominion. For the Zionist these forces are not abstractions or myths but they are very real, and one of the main emphases in the movement is on keeping their flock intact from these forces which are activated primarily by negative human acts and to help others who come to them for help. Zionists firmly believe in the power of such concrete evil forces which are directed through certain specific agents and their means to afflict specific persons. It was only in the eighteenth century that belief in witches was declared a heresy in the Church of England, but exorcism as a rite was not declared null and void as most Protestant churches believe. The Zionist emphasis on exorcism might not be as unscriptural as it seems to some. Even the Zionist's ritual emphasis may be a meaningful exercise within the context.

The real antagonist in Zionism is the sorcerer—it is as if Satan is pushed into the background because of the strong feeling of the looming presence of these evil forces. Satan does not work through certain ritual but tempts people directly into doing what is morally wrong such as violent acts which disturb the peace of their group. Satan attacks the group; the sorcerer attacks the individual. Satan is spiritual; the sorcerer is human.

Here the processes used by the diviner also come to the fore. Perhaps reference should be made to the psycho-therapeutic process of the diviner (cf. (Mkhwanazi 1986: 9–94). Three different stages may be described. First is the divination stage when incense is burned and the ancestors are called up to be present at the diagnosis session. The clairvoyant powers are received by the diviner through the voices of the ancestors who address the diviner. Only when they are ready to assist will the diviner act. When the diviner is ready, he or she then faces the client and the *vumisa* method begins. This method ascertains by successive statements by the afflicted person and his or her relatives the reasons for the problem. This is the first part of the therapy process. Here it is the diviner who informs the client or victim of the nature and cause of the illness or discomfort. At this stage (which lasts 20 to 30 minutes) the diviner is most active. The second stage of therapy follows in which the client/victim asks questions and clarification from the diviner. The diviner now informs the client/victim and his or her family how the disturbed behaviour occurred. This is explained from the traditional belief system. The provision of such a belief system appears to be of some therapeutic value for the patient. 'Reassurance, explanation, advice, suggestion, direction are important variables in this stage of the diviner's therapeutic process. The diviner gives the reassurance by accepting the patient's

problem as nothing unusual and p. 429 indicates that it can be treated' (*ibid*: 93). The therapeutic process is also now outlined, e.g., what the client/victim should avoid and what rituals should be performed, for example, the slaughtering of an ox or goat.

In this stage the relationship between client/victim and the diviner has become one of confidence in which the former discloses matters that are disturbing to him; his difficulties are analyzed by the diviner and information and understanding given of his or her difficulties.

In stage three the actual treatment procedures, rituals to be performed as part of therapy, animal sacrifices, the period of treatment, and location of the therapy treatment (in patient's family or home of the diviner) are discussed. In most cases it is done at the diviner's home. In this phase patients continue to unburden themselves of issues which trouble them. The patients' problems qualify the length of treatment. Lots of hope is offered to the patient by the diviner (*ibid*. 93–94). Empathy, warmth, and genuineness are characteristics revealed by the diviner toward the client/victim.

The approach of the prayer healer/prophet does not differ in intensity, in empathy, warmth, and genuineness from that of the diviner. The prayer healer/prophet in the Zionist context fills the vacuum created in the historic churches where healing (except for the often impersonal prayers) is relegated to a cold atmosphere of Western-orientated hospitals or asylums, where the patient does not encounter the warmth and empathy, even genuineness, she or he experienced with the diviner. Just as in the case of the diviner, the presence of the Holy Spirit and/or the ancestors are also important. In some cases candles are lit—white represents the Holy Spirit, another colour, say green, the ancestors of the prophet, and blue or yellow the ancestors of the victim. Not only is the presence of the ancestors important but those of the prophet and those of the client/victim should not be in discord about the diagnosis and procedures. Here also the clairvoyant powers are received from the Holy Spirit and the ancestors. About 16 percent of a sample of prayer healers maintained they receive visions only through the work of the Holy Spirit while the others emphasized also the cooperation of the ancestors. In some cases ancestors seemed to take precedence over the Holy Spirit.

During the first stage the illness is established and is usually conveyed to the prayer healer through a dream or a vision. The dream comes the night before the arrival of the victim or in the case of an unannounced arrival, the diagnosis is given 'like lightning through a vision'. After this the patient is questioned about his or her illness. Then follows the explanation by the prophet as to what and how it all p. 430 happened, and finally the victims are treated and given reasons for the procedure.

During this stage there is much communication between the prophet and patients. They are also treated in the prophet's home or with their relatives. The social communication is part of the therapy. In many cases chickens, or a goat or sheep, or even a beast, are slaughtered. Often the victim is informed by the prophet of some secretive rituals that have been performed against him or her by the mystical assailant. Hardly any cases have been encountered either in Soweto or in the townships round Durban of bewitchment, i.e., being negatively affected by persons who have some mystical power in their personalities, without the use of magic, to harm others. The Zionists are considered to be experts in granting people protection and fortification against the powers of evil. This accounts to a great extent for the growth of the movement. What holds them together are the potential attacks and destruction that the mystical assailants could achieve if they were not strengthened against them.

One could argue, and this seems to be a valid argument, that much of the emphasis on the mystical aggressors stem from the subconscious reaction to an unfriendly environment. Zionists are emphatic that sorcerers will never get a foothold or be able to

act in their circle; if it does happen at very rare occasions, it shatters the group. The main emphasis is that the destructive forces are from the outside, not from the inner circle. But such an outsider is never specially mentioned. It is not the sorcerer who has to be destroyed or eliminated—as is the case with a witch—but only the evil acts of the sorcerer. Very few Zionist healers work only through the Holy Spirit and prayer. As has already been indicated, ancestors play a significant role, as well as ritual cleansing through vomiting, steaming and emetics.

Sorcery gives Zionists a sense of cohesion in a fiendish world where an incessant enemy has to be confronted. The process of modernization in changing the traditional world has made sorcery a force to be reckoned with, and the Zionists have become experts in counteracting its evil effects. This is why AIC have become a source of strength for many. It has a special way, based on the African worldview, of alleviating suffering.

THE PROPHET AND CONTEXTUAL HEALING

The office of prophet, which disappeared in the church during the end of the third century, mainly as a result of the reaction against Montanus and his prophetesses, Prisca and Maxmilla, has reappeared after nearly P. 431 seventeen centuries in the Zionist churches in Southern Africa. In the nature religions one find the *shamaans*, who are also seers, and this is referred to as actual prophecy. The Zionist prophets, however, are not so much concerned about the future as about the specific needs, especially healing of people. In the small, dynamic AIC communities which are often substitutes for the extended family, the prayer healers keep the relationships on a healthy basis. Here the members feel supported and protected. The flag planted at the open space utilized for worship keeps evil forces away, as do the candles, the vestments, the sea sand sprinkled in and around the house, the crosses and the holy staves which ward off the attacks of sorcerers.

The office of prayer healer in the AIC indicates a vacuum in the counselling and psychotherapy within the historic churches. A much greater understanding is found in the AIC of the complex relationship between culture and healing, ie., in its physical and psychiatric context. It is being better understood, especially in a new cross-cultural psychiatry, that the reality is not intrinsic to our perception of the world—the Western fallacy—as it is defined by our assumptions of the world. On the contrary, each culture is important in its own right, and this is what the AIC and its activities wish to say. Disease is thus not a separate entity stuck away in its pure form under the layers of cultural camouflage. It must be studied within the context of specific cultural norms and the accepted patterns of normative behaviour within which it occurs.

In spite of being in contact with a secularized worldview, the animistic and personalized, rather than scientific and mechanistic worldview, predominates within many in the AIC. Thus to be therapeutic, treatment of illness among black people should be presented in a manner culturally meaningful to the patient's prior experience and expectations. These expectations are not fulfilled in the historic churches as far as their counselling is concerned. Industrialization and urbanization have led to the disappearance of the 'tradition-directed personality' while the 'inner-directed personality' has not yet taken shape. This leads to psychiatric problems, but here also the AIC acts as a modernization process to assist in this transition.

It is important to see what actually is at stake when, for example, a person believes she or he has an evil spirit as a result of the activities of a sorcerer. Such external dangers can be removed much more easily when the danger is internal since it prevents severe individual neurosis. Spirit-possession, bewitchment, and sorcery could be related to a person's psycho-social crisis, especially in rapid social change. To project one's

weaknesses on evil spirits who possess or who influence p. 432 one's behaviour has an effect on the concept of guilt. This is also the case when sin is washed off or removed through vomiting and emetics. These have theological implications which may be criticized, but when they lead to positive healing, the situation becomes ambivalent. But acts performed in a culture cannot be summarily described as 'pagan.' The Bible is often more lenient than the legalistic approaches of ecclesiastic authoritarianism.

The Western displacement of the African approach to the biblical message should be confronted even within the so-called historic churches in Africa, and alien forms of pastoral care in some of these churches should be replaced by an approach which comes nearer to the realities of Africa. In counselling, the symbols that live in their minds should be utilized in such a way that individuals can express their inner feelings. In dealing with sorcery, some form of ritual assistance is necessary. Symbols and signs are important in African therapy as is evident in the AIC at their services and baptisms. A contextualization of the pastoral approach to evil forces should take place; much more will be attained when prayer is supplemented with specific rituals. It is necessary that exorcism not become an obsession. Instead of looking at the world as loaded with evil forces, it should be viewed as in the hands of the infinite almighty Creator whose love has been revealed through his Son who abides with this world always.

Demon-possession cannot be looked upon as mere illusion or superstition or as a psychological imbalance. Scripture writers took it seriously and handled it in this spirit for the sake of those who felt themselves possessed. These people receive close attention in the AIC. Sunday after Sunday the North Beach of Durban witnesses exorcism practiced by the AIC on people coming from many parts of the country such as Soweto, Mamelodi, Bloemfontein, as well as Swaziland, Lesotho, Boputhatswana. To many the sea is the best place for this activity.

In their whole approach to healing the AIC act spontaneously. The outcome is an adapted, contextualized approach within the cosmology of those among whom they live and work. This accounts for the meaningful way in which they handle the vicissitudes against body and mind in the modern situation.

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