

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF
TRADITIONAL RELIGION
IN SOME SOUTH AFRICAN
INDEPENDENT CHURCHES
AND THE CHURCH IN KOREA

Missiological Research

BY

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PROMOTER

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When I first came to South Africa during 1991, I found that I had to adapt myself to the prevailing circumstances, differing lifestyles, customs, culture and language. I endeavoured to direct my energies to acquaint myself with many differing people of this country and to learn from them.

In time, I met Prof Heuer who was a Presbyterian Pastor. He advised me to study at the University of Durban-Westville. My interest was the relationship between Church Growth and Traditional Religion.

I was introduced and welcomed by the current Dean Prof Krige and the staff of the Faculty of Theology. I studied in the Department of Church History and Missiology.

When I wrote my Masters Thesis, I was guided by Prof Krige, Prof Goba and Prof Balia. My interest in the role of traditional religion in the Church Growth of South African and Korean Church motivated me to do my Doctorate because my missionary work has been related to Christian Church and Traditional Religion.

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I dedicate this thesis to my late mother who would have been proud to see the successful result of my study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
1. REASON FOR THE STUDY	3
2. METHODOLOGY	4
2.1 Procedure	4
2.2 The Scope of Study	5
3. DEFINITIONS	6
 CHAPTER ONE: TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN SOUTH AFRICA	
1. INTRODUCTION	9
2. THE BRIEF HISTORY AND CULTURAL ROLE OF THE ZULU RELIGION	13
3. THE CONTENTS OF THE TRADITIONAL ZULU RELIGION	22
3.1 The View of God	22
3.2 The End of the World	31
3.3 Prayer and Blessing	32
3.4 The Supernatural World	32
3.5 Salvation	34
3.6 Worship	34
3.7 Ancestors and Spirits	36
3.8 The Cosmos	39
3.9 Humanity	39
3.10 The View of Death	41
3.11 Dreams	43
4. PRIESTS	44

4.1	The Classification of Priests	44
4.2	Function	53
4.3	Role	57
5.	RELIGIOUS PATTERNS AND SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS	57
5.1	Location	57
5.2	Community	57
5.3	Ancestral Worship	58
5.4	Tribal Religion	59
5.5	Religion of Everyday Life without Sacred Scriptures	59
5.6	Communication with Ancestors	60
6.	EFFECTS AND EXECUTION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF IN AFRICANS' LIFE ..	61

CHAPTER TWO: THE GROWTH OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

1.	THE SPREADING OF THE GOSPEL, THE HISTORY OF CHURCH DEVELOPMENT AND THE SEPARATION OF CHURCHES	66
2.	THE GROWTH OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCH	69
2.1	The Growth of the Mainline (White) Church	69
2.2	The Mission Church	73
2.3	The Growth of an Independent Church	77
2.3.1	Definition of an Independent Church	77
2.3.2	The Origin of an Independent Church	79

2.3.3	Some Reasons for the Establishment of an Independent Church	84
2.3.4	The Ethiopian Church	86
2.3.5	Zionist Churches	91
2.3.6	Apostolic Churches	95
2.3.7	Evangelical-Pentecostal-type Churches	96
2.3.8	Shembe Churches	97
2.3.9	Zionist-Cum-Ethiopian Churches	102
2.3.10	Other Independent Churches	102
2.3.11	The Results of Church Growth	103
3.	THE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTENTS OF INDEPENDENT CHURCHES	105
3.1	The Appearance of the Prophets' Group	105
3.2	Growth under Oppression	107
3.3	The Features of Growth	108
3.4	Conservation of Tradition	109
3.5	Healing	110
3.6	Emphasising of Spirituality	111
3.7	Emphasising of Offering	112
3.8	The Role of Women	112
3.9	The Emphasis on the Prayer Mountain	116
3.10	Emergence of Prophets	117
3.11	Hereditary Leadership	119
3.12	Trend of Disruption	119
3.13	Characteristics of the Independent Church	120

4.	THE RESULTS OF GROWTH	122
----	-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER THREE: THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCH, ESPECIALLY THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH 124

1.	A COMPARISON BETWEEN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY	124
1.1	Perceptions and Dogma	124
1.1.1	The Perception of God	124
1.1.2	The Perception of Humanity	125
1.1.3	Death	126
1.1.4	Bantu Messiah	127
1.1.5	Good and Evil	127
1.1.6	Spirits	127
1.1.7	Sin	128
1.1.8	Good Hope	129
1.2	Forms of Worship and Ancestor Veneration	129
1.2.1	The Object of Worship	129
1.2.2	Sacred Ritual	131
1.2.3	Order of Worship	131
1.2.4	Ecstasy	133
1.3	Comparison of the Role of the Priest of the Traditional Religion and Christianity in Religion and Society	134
1.3.1	Calling	134

1.3.2	Role	134
1.4	Comparison of the Religious Systems	135
1.5	The Elements of Worship	140
1.5.1	Dance and songs	140
1.5.2	The Prayer	142
1.5.3	Communion	145
1.5.4	Dreams and Visions	147
1.5.5	Special Items	148
1.5.6	Healing	149
1.6	Garments	151
1.6.1	Dress	151
1.6.2	Flag	153
1.6.3	Stick	153
2.	VESTIGES OF TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN SOUTH AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES	156
2.1	Africans who are Living in a United Religion and a Society	156
2.1.1	Style of Worship	156
2.1.2	The Religion in People's Lives	157
2.2	The Special Characteristics of African Independent Churches which are Related to Traditional Religion	158
2.2.1	Healing	158
2.2.2	Group Conversion	160
2.2.3	Return to Tradition	161
2.3	Traditional Elements in African Independent Churches	162

2.3.1	Magical Characteristics	163
2.3.2	Use of Rhythmical Instruments	164
2.3.3	Prophetic Religion	165
2.3.4	The Importance of Symbols	166
2.3.5	Etiquette	167
2.4	The Proofs of Practice	167
2.4.1	The Holy Place	167
2.4.2	The Place of Worship	168
2.4.3	No Concept of Judgement	168
2.4.4	Hereditary Leadership	169
3.	THE ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN INDEPENDENT CHURCH GROWTH	169
3.1	The Formation of Belief Systems	169
3.2	External Growth	170
3.3	The Development of Black Christian Theology	171
3.4	The Role of the Religious Leader	173
3.5	The Tolerance of the Ancestral Worship	174
3.6	Mode and Procedure of Worship	176
3.7	The Role of Women in the Independent Church	176
3.8	No Idol	177
3.9	Similarities in Biblical and Traditional Customs	177
3.10	Mystical Belief	180
3.11	Congregational Meeting as Festival	181

3.12	Healing	181
3.13	Community Consciousness of "Simunye"	182

CHAPTER FOUR: SHAMANISM AS THE TRADITIONAL RELIGION AMONGST THE KOREAN POPULATION 185

1.	THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SHAMANISM	185
2.	SHAMANISM AS FOLK RELIGION, ART AND CUSTOM	192
3.	THE FUNCTION OF THE SHAMAN WITHIN THE COMMUNITY	196
4.	THE ESSENCE OF SHAMANISM AND THE 'GUT' AS CEREMONIAL WORSHIP	201
5.	CHARACTERISTICS OF SHAMANISM	204

CHAPTER FIVE: SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF KOREAN CHURCH GROWTH 212

1.	SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF KOREAN CHURCH GROWTH	212
1.1	The Meaning of Church Growth	212
1.2	Numerical Growth	213
1.3	External Growth	214
1.4	Self-Generated Growth	215
1.5	Growth of the Presbyterian and Full Gospel Churches	217
1.6	Activities of Women's Associations	218
1.7	Growth of Christianity as a Popular Religion	219
1.8	Periods of Growth	220
1.9	Growth as a Similar Shamanistic Church	220

2.	ELEMENTS OF GROWTH	222
2.1	Internal Elements of Growth	222
2.1.1	Early Morning Prayer Meetings and Mountain Prayer	222
2.1.2	Home Visitations	223
2.1.3	Intense Evangelical Activity of Ministers and Laymen	224
2.1.4	Activities of Women as Assistant Ministers	226
2.1.4.1	Women Evangelists (Jeon do sa)	226
2.1.4.2	Kwunsa (as the Function of the Woman Elder)	227
2.1.4.3	The Wife of the Pastor	227
2.1.5	Spiritual Revival and Bible Class	228
2.1.6	The Nevius Mission Policy	230
2.2	Social and Religious Causes	231
2.2.1	The Role of Leadership in Korean Glasnost	231
2.2.2	Powerlessness of Other Religions	233
2.2.3	Disruption of Denominations	235
3.	EFFECTS OF CHURCH GROWTH	236

CHAPTER 6: THE ROLE OF SHAMANISM IN KOREAN CHURCH GROWTH 240

1.	COMPARISON OF SHAMANISM AND CHRISTIANITY	240
1.1	Perceptions (Dogma)	240

1.1.1	Perceptions of God	240
1.1.2	Perception of Creation	242
1.1.3	The Perception of a Supernatural World and Salvation	242
1.1.4	The Perception of Human Nature	243
1.1.5	The Perception of Blessing	245
1.1.6	Perception of Healing	246
1.1.7	The Perception of Leadership	247
1.1.8	Perception of Spirits and Death	250
1.1.9	Perception of Gifts	252
1.2	A Comparison of Forms and Elements of Worship	253
1.2.1	Aspects of Worship (Nature of Worship)	253
1.2.2	Order of Worship	255
1.2.3	Garments of Worship	259
1.2.4	The Use of Musical Instruments in Ritual	260
1.2.5	The Object and Content of Worship	261
1.2.6	Objects of Worship	263
1.3	Comparison of Priest	264
1.3.1	Interpretations of the Shaman's Title	264
1.3.2	Sin Byong Che Heom	265
1.3.3	Seong Mu Gwa Jeong	267
1.3.4	Roles	269
1.4	ORGANIZATION OF RELIGION	270
1.4.1	Self-Organization	270

1.4.2	Management of Followers	271
2.	SHAMANISM IN THE KOREAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH	274
2.1	The Capacity of Korean Shamanism to Assimilate Other Religions	276
2.2	Emotional Elements of Religious Koreans	281
2.3	Character of the Korean Church	287
2.3.1	The Extremely Individual Character of the Korean Church	287
2.3.2	The Passivity of the Korean Church	290
2.3.3	Formalistic Character of the Korean Church	291
2.3.4	Conscientiousness of Church	292
2.3.5	The Prayer-Centred Church	293
2.3.6	Bible-Centred Church	294
2.3.7	Sacrificial Service Within the Korean Church	295
2.4	EMERGENCE OF SHAMANISTIC COLOURS IN THE KOREAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH	297
2.4.1	Elements in Faith	297
2.4.2	The Element of Prophecy in the Korean Christian church	298
2.4.3	Elements of Ethics	299
2.4.4	Aesthetic Elements	301
2.4.5	Elements of Music	304
2.4.6	Economic Elements (Mammonism)	304
2.4.7	Social Elements	305
2.4.8	Non-political Elements	306

2.5	PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE AND PRACTICE OF SHAMANISM IN KOREAN CHURCH LIFE	307
2.5.1	In Worship	307
2.5.2	Establishment of Faith	311
2.5.3	In Lifestyle	313
2.5.4	In Customs	314
2.5.5	In Ideas	316
2.5.6	Ministry Style	318
2.5.7	Current Practice of Faith in the Full Gospel Church	322
3.	THE ROLE OF SHAMANISM IN KOREAN CHURCH GROWTH	324
3.1	Reasons for Penetration of Korean Christian Church by Shamanism	326
3.2	In Church Growth	328
3.2.1	The Role of Shamanism in the History of the Korean Church	328
3.2.1.1	Early Period	328
3.2.1.2	Major Revival of 1910	330
3.2.1.3	Period of Japanese Colonisation	331
3.2.1.4	Pre- and Post-War Period (After Independence): 1945-1959	333
3.2.1.5	In the Industrial Development Period: 1960s-1970s	334
3.2.1.6	1980 to the Present	335
3.2.2	In Growth of Faith	336
3.2.2.1	Acceptance of Faith	336
3.2.2.2	In Faith Revival	337
3.2.3	In External Growth	338

3.2.3.1	In Evangelism	338
3.2.3.2	In Collection	340
3.2.3.3	In Organization	340
3.2.3.4	In the Concept of Growth and Success	342
3.3	Koreanistic Worship Style	343
3.4	Pastor as Shaman	344
3.5	In the Development of Koreanistic Theology	345
3.6	In Social Development (Especially Social Service)	347
3.6.1	In Art and Culture	347
3.6.2	In Social Service	349
3.7	The Negative Role	350

CHAPTER 7: THE COMPARISON OF CHURCH GROWTH IN KOREA AND SOUTH AFRICA 357

1.	COMPARISON BETWEEN THE ZULU RELIGION AND SHAMANISM	357
1.1	The Characteristics of Religion	357
1.2	The Concept of the God	357
1.3	The Role of the Traditional Priest	360
1.4	Ancestor Veneration	361
1.5	No concept of Salvation	362
1.6	Musical Instruments	362

2.	COMPARISON BETWEEN THE SOUTH AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCH AND THE KOREAN CHURCH	363
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2.1	Life-Style and Belief	363
2.2	Developing of Aboriginal Hymns	365
2.3	The Minister in the Role of Traditional Priest	365
2.4	The Different Attitude to the Accepting Christianity	365
2.5	Return to Traditional Religion from Christianity	366
3.	COMPARISON OF CHURCH GROWTH IN THE RESPECTIVE CHURCHES	367
3.1	The Main Element of Growth	367
3.2	Political and Racial Oppression	368
3.3	The Elements of Traditional Religion which are Absorbed into Church Growth	369
3.4	Missionary Work for Education	370
3.5	Studying of Traditional Culture and Language	371
3.6	The Growth after Becoming a Separate Independent Church	374
3.7	Self-Growth	374
4.	COMMON FACTORS AND DIVERGENCES	375
5.	THE REASONS WHY THE FRUITS OF EVANGELISM ARE POOR IN ASIAN COUNTRIES	377
6.	THE RESULTS OF COMPARATIVE STUDY	380
	CONCLUSION	383
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	387

INTRODUCTION

Christianity has produced many missionaries since the seventeenth century, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Churches grew in numbers and active studies of this phenomenon have been undertaken. Missiology has become an independent branch of theology and more recently church growth theology has been introduced.

The Korean church has shown enormous growth in the hundred years since the introduction of the Christian Gospel in Korea.

Christians of other countries envy this and expect the Korean church to lead the way in world mission. Of the 50 largest church congregations in the world, 23 are in Korea¹.

The Korean church growth has attracted international attention as a special model. Scholars of church growth, such as Donald McGavran², as well as Koreans themselves, are monitoring church growth in Korea. My interest is in the analysis of the type of

¹. Lee Jeong Ik, *How to Conquer Secession from Church*(The Pastoral Monthly, vol.201, Seoul, 1993) p.40

². Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, William B.Eerdmans, USA, 1970) p.132

growth of the Korean church, with particular reference to the role of Shamanism therein.

When I came to South Africa as one of the missionaries whom the growing Korean church sent out into the world I found new facts about South African Christianity during my mission work. Apartheid was already breaking down and the South African church was very much more of a growing church than I had realised. Patrick Johnstone reported in his book, *Operation World*, that South African Christians including the Roman Catholics comprised 81.7% of the population³.

South Africa became an independent country in 1910. During this time, in spite of the political conditions when white people ruled, the churches grew enormously without distinguishing among the races. Most white men were church members and huge numbers of African people accepted the Christianity brought by White settlers, even though there were some elements of separation among the races, and Black independent church growth was especially strong. I gave attention to the reason for the African church growth and from my mission work among African people I

³. Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World* (Wec Press Bucks, England, 1990) p.377

gained the impression that some elements of African traditional religion influenced African independent church growth.

A. Reasons for the Study

All the people of the world are in a sense religious. The Apostle Paul said that the recognition of God existed in the native cultures of each nation. As we know from the customs of the cases of Melchizedek of Canaan (Genesis 14:17-24) and the Unknown God in Arden (Acts 17:22-29), God prepared all people to receive the Gospel.

We call the various preparatory religious phenomena traditional religions. These traditional religions have definitely had some influence on Christian church growth in the form of conversion or attitude, and if the traditional religion played some role in church growth it must be possible to ascertain what the role is. Therefore, as an observer who had experienced two cases of church growth in South Africa and Korea which are situated at the ends of Africa and Asia respectively, I want to study and investigate the positive role of traditional religions in South African church growth and Korean church growth and find their common points.

I wish to emphasise that the main focus of this thesis is a comparative study of two cases in South Africa and Korea about the role of traditional religion in church growth. Although I have referred to the writing and research of other scholars this was in order to introduce briefly the traditional religion and church growth of these two countries.

Many scholars study the relationship between the Christian church and traditional religions and culture. However, there are few comparative studies of different cases in different countries. As a result of my study I want to contribute to the development of missiology and the study of church growth.

B. Methodology

1. Procedure

I will analyse the form of growth and elements of South African Independent churches, investigate the characteristics of South African traditional religion, and then study which traditional religious elements contributed to the growth of South African independent churches.

I will seek to discover the nature of growth in the course of Korean church history and will study the religious and cultural bases and characters of the Korean people. I will clearly show that shamanism is embedded in the Korean mind and has contributed to the Korean church growth.

I will enumerate and compare the roles of traditional religions in the church growth of South Africa and Korea and identify their common elements. The result of my study will be helpful to scholars and missionaries who work with peoples who differ in culture and religion.

2. Scope of the Study

In the case of South Africa there are mainline churches which consist mainly of White people, independent churches which consist of Black people, Coloured churches and Indian churches. I will discuss some of the South African churches, concentrating on the African(Black) independent churches, especially the South African Zionist Church. For the term "South African traditional religion" there are various definitions depending on the tribes. I want to study the traditional religion of the Black people with special attention to the Zulu tribe of KwaZulu-Natal.

C. Definitions

1. Church growth: I use this term to imply both numerical and internal growth.

2. Shamanism: Mudang, known as the Korean shaman, and all related religious ritual and thought, as well as a similar common faith, are encompassed by this term.

3. Spirit: There are many Korean religious, traditional and philosophical words, which are difficult to translate into English, especially the concept of God and the spirit, which differ slightly from the Western concept. Therefore, I use the following words within a specific context:

soul - the spirit of a living person

spirit - the spirit of a dead person

4. God: Christian God;

god: (i) common concept of god;

(ii) sometimes used interchangeably with spirits.

5. Korean church: This term refers to the Korean Protestant churches within Korea, including all Protestant denominations.

6. South African Independent Church: this is the church for African people only which was established by the African people themselves and was separated from the missionary churches or the missionaries. It is called the Independent Church because they were separated from the missionaries and governed by themselves.

7. African People: The people who live in Africa can be called African people. However, other races apart from Black people came from elsewhere to live in South Africa, so 'South African' can include people other than Black. However, for the purposes of this study, 'African people' refers to Blacks.

8. South African traditional religion: the traditional religion of Black people in South Africa

9. Mainline Churches: these churches are the churches which came from Europe and originally consisted mainly of White people in South Africa. However, they now include many African congregations as well.

10. Terminology: It is difficult to translate philosophical religious words into English therefore I use the words from the original language to facilitate understanding and to express the concepts exactly, for example, *isangoma*.

CHAPTER ONE TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. INTRODUCTION

Where is African religion found? African religion is found in the ritual, ceremonies and festivals of the people. The religion is also found in art, symbols, music, dance, proverbs, names of people, myths, customs and all aspects of life.

One of the dominant attitudes in the middle of the twentieth century was the assumption that African beliefs, cultural characteristics and even foods, for example bread, were all borrowed from the outside world. These earlier descriptions and studies of African religions left us with terms which are inadequate, derogatory and prejudicial. They clearly betray the kind of attitude and interpretation dominant in the mind of those who invented or propagated the different theories about traditional religion. *Animism* is a word derived from the Latin *anima* which means breath, breath of life, and hence carries with it the idea of the soul or spirit. This term has become the most popular designation for African religions and is found in many writings even to this day. It was coined by the English anthropologist, E.B.Tylor, who used it first in an article in

1866 and later in his book, *Primitive Culture*(1871).¹

Hulkrantz predicted that "...historians of religion will come increasingly to observe the 'primitive religions' in their multiformity"².

During the last few decades several scholars have shown interest in the field of primal religions, particularly African traditional religions. Research on African religions has been published fairly widely. Its importance to the science of religion has been well established Nevertheless many people find the study of African traditional religion obscure. Yet, increasingly, African religions are required to make a contribution to contemporary interfaith debate³.

However, the themes of interfaith must be taken as fully representing the extent of the traditional religious life.

¹. Tylor, E.B, *Primitive Culture*, Vols.I and II, London, 1871.

². Ake Hulkrantz, *The Study of American Indian Religions*, Christopher Vecsey(ed.), New York: The Crossroad Co. and Scholars Press, 1983, P. 94

³. Olupona Jacob K., *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, Paragon House Publishers, New York, 1991, p. 26.

The titles of this thesis and some of its chapters use the term 'African traditional religion' to refer to all the indigenous religions of the area.

This term includes more than the faiths of the various indigenous African, Nguni-speaking peoples, because it includes also the religious of the San and the Khoikhoi peoples. In this wider sense South Africa's traditional, indigenous religions will be characterised independently of the influence of the White settlers⁴.

The Nguni-speaking people of South Africa introduced to South Africa, farming and iron-making skills. Their agricultural way of life restricted them to a sedentary way of life. Historical records prove the existence of settlements in the interior of the east coast as early as the sixteenth century and they had probably settled in the hinterland beyond the Drakensberg as well. Archaeological evidence proves that there were settlements in the eastern half of the country during the first millennium. This south-eastern Nguni-speaking group included the Zulu-Xhosa-

⁴. Kiernan, J.P., The Production and Management of Therapeutic Power in Zionist Churches within a Zulu City, p.15.

Swazi, the Sotho-Tswana, the Venda, the Shona and others⁵.

2

When we discuss traditional religion, contemporary people, historical sites, sacred objects and religious content are important sources. African people lead their entire lives in their religion. The two are inseparable.

The individual is immersed in a religious participation which starts before birth and continues after his death. For him therefore, and for the larger community of which he is part, to live is to be caught up in a religious drama. Names of people have religious meanings; rocks and boulders are not just natural objects, but religious objects; the sound of the drum speaks a religious language; the eclipse of the sun or moon is not simply a silent phenomenon of nature, but one which speaks to the community that observes it, often warning of an impending catastrophe. There are countless examples of this kind. The point here is that in terms of African ontology, the whole of existence is a religious phenomenon.

When I refer to South African traditional religion, I mean

⁵. Kiernan Jim, "African Traditional Religions in South Africa" in *Living Faiths in South Africa*. David Philip Publishers, 1995. p.19

religious phenomena which pertain to black people who have lived in Southern Africa from the past to the present. The point of my study is not a discussion which aims to define traditional religion. I will discuss contemporary phenomena of primal religious practices of those who live in southern Africa (it is not easy to divide the territory between the present Republic of South Africa and other neighbouring countries in terms of tradition). I will discuss the traditional religions of several different tribes, - Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Swazi, Ndebele, Venda, Tswana and Shona - but my main focus is the traditional religion of the Zulu people.

2. A brief history and cultural role of the Zulu religion

Early Zulu history is shrouded in mystery and romantic speculation. Until the beginning of the first European settlement of Natal in 1824, the Zulus had no reliable written records. Therefore, many scholars and laymen are forced to rely upon various fragmentary accounts such as tales told by shipwrecked sailors and imperfectly recorded Zulu oral traditions. Archaeological excavations and linguistic evidence fill in some details but in general the knowledge of pre-nineteenth-century Zulu history is highly speculative.

The Zulus are a Nguni people like the Xhosa and Swazi with whom they share many similarities and a language which differs simply in terms of dialect. They appear to have lived in Southern Africa for several centuries, possibly since the third century A.D. Tradition states they came from the north and many writers (e.g. Bryant, A.T., 1927) have identified their "original homeland" as "Central" or "East Africa". Among Europeans the idea grew up, largely as a result of the writings of the historian G.M.Theal, that the Nguni were recent migrants into Southern Africa.

Today, however, it is generally accepted that the Nguni have been in southern Africa for many centuries. Some writers think they originated in West Africa and certain archaeological finds support this view. But, generally, it is safe to say we simply do not know the pre-history of the Nguni.⁶

It seems reasonable to suppose that clear evidence on the subject would have emerged during the period of recorded history. However, this is not the case. Knowledge of Zulu history prior to the time when the great Zulu king Shaka began to allow Europeans to visit his court is very sketchy.

⁶. Elizabeth Isicher, A History of Christianity in Africa, Africa World Press Inc., New Jersey, U.S.A., 1995, p.110.

Anyone who wants more detailed information about Zulu history⁷ should consult THE OXFORD HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICA, vols. 1 & 2, edited by Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1969 & 1971).⁸ Older, traditional accounts are to be found in A.T. Bryant's THE ZULU PEOPLE: AS THEY WERE BEFORE THE WHITE MAN CAME (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter & Shooter, 1949)⁹ and E.A. Ritter's SHAKA ZULU: THE RISE OF THE ZULU EMPIRE (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1965).¹⁰ Critical discussions of the history of the Zulu and other South African societies are to be found in Leonard Thompson, ed., AFRICAN SOCIETIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (London, Heinemann, 1969)¹¹ and COLLECTED SEMINAR PAPERS ON THE SOCIETIES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA which are compiled by Shula Marks and published by the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in

⁷ Xexham Irving, Texts on Zulu Religion, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1987 p.4-5

⁸. Thompson, Leonard and Monica Wilson, The Oxford History of South Africa, vols. 1 & 2, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969 & 1971.

⁹. Bryant, A.T., The Zulu People: As They Were Before the White Man Came, Shuter and Shooter, Pietermaritzburg, 1949.

¹⁰. Ritter, E.A., Shaka Zulu: The Rise of the Zulu Empire, G. Putnam's Son, New York, 1965.

¹¹. Thompson, Leonard, ed., African Societies in Southern Africa, Heinemann, London, 1969.

London.¹²

The first inhabitants of southern Africa were the Khoi('Hottentots'), and San('Bushmen'), light-complexioned peoples, speaking related, but unique click languages. The former were pastoralists, the latter hunter-gatherers¹³.

Who, then, are the Zulu (Bantu, Nguni) people of Natal? In the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century a relatively small African clan migrated into northern Natal. From the name of their family chieftain, Zulu, son of Malandela, they became known as the people of Zulu(*amaZulu*) or, since 'Zulu' means 'the heavens', perhaps 'they thought of themselves as 'people of the heavens'.

The more recent history of the Zulu people, beginning with their leader Senzangakhona and his illustrious son Shaka, is relatively well-known. In Senzangakhona's day the *amaZulu* probably numbered no more than 1,500 people scattered over the rolling green hillsides of Natal. There were other Nguni-speaking tribes in the same general area; some were larger, such as the Mthethwa, and

¹². Shula Marks, *Collected Seminar Papers on the Societies of Southern Africa*, The Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London.

¹³. Elizabeth Isicher, *A History of Christianity in Africa*, 1995, p.101

some smaller, such as the Elangeni. By the time Shaka was assassinated in 1828 after ruling for approximately twelve years, a new day had dawned for the Bantu people of southern Africa. Approximately two million people had been killed either in warfare or at Shaka's express command, but a few strong nations had emerged from what had previously been merely scattered tribes. Among those nations, the Zulu were the strongest, numbering a quarter of a million and inhabiting the coastal strip from the Swazi border on the Pongola River to central Natal, and from the coast inland as far as the Drakensberg range. This is roughly the territory known today as Zululand¹⁴.

Although many present-day Zulu people have moved beyond the borders of Zululand and have, to a large degree, become urbanised, others have remained, and still enjoy a traditional lifestyle. There are many people of Zulu ancestry who work in South Africa in varying occupations from university professors, leaders of industry and administrators to labourers and housewives. The focus of this chapter, however, falls upon those, both past and present, who have continued to follow the traditional lifestyle. Political structures exist to unite urban

¹⁴ S A Thorpe, *African Traditional Religions*, Unisa, 1991, p.32

and rural Zulu. An example is the organisation known as Inkatha, led by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, to whom approximately 1,5 million Zulus pledge their support. Modern Zulus are not only aware but proud of their cultural heritage and, like all of us, they perpetuate remnants of that heritage in their modern lifestyle and world view.

Traditionally a Zulu person belongs to both a lineage and a territorial division. While these may coincide, they do not necessarily do so.

A territorial division, called a chiefdom, is governed by a chief (*inkosi*). While the chief's clan predominates in his own territory, other lineage clans may also be represented as a result of, for example, intermarriage. A chief's territory may be subdivided into smaller units called homesteads (*umuzi*), each under the immediate authority of an appointed headman whose position is not hereditary: should he fail to perform his duties adequately, he can be replaced. The Zulu chief is responsible to his own councillors and both past custom and mutual agreement are honoured in any form of decision-making. Each chief owes allegiance to the Zulu king (paramount chief) and collectively

the chiefdoms or the Zulu nation.¹⁵

While a person can change his place of residence and thus his chiefdom, he can not change his clan or lineage membership. That is his inheritance by birth.

The nuclear family, consisting of a man, his wife and their children, is as important among Zulu people as it is among most other people throughout the world. Traditional Zulu families live in homesteads or kraals consisting of one or more dwellings. Since a man may have more than one wife, each wife has her own hut and, together with her children, forms a distinct family unit. Each hut is divided into two sections, the right side for men and the left side for women. An area to the back of the hut, the *umsamo*, is reserved for offerings to the ancestors. This is their special place, as is the cattle kraal.

It was once a cherished legend of the White South African community that the Bantu crossed the Limpopo at much the same time as the first white settlers reached the Cape. This belief was demolished by archaeological research, which established the arrival of iron-using Bantu in South Africa from at least AD 200,

¹⁵. Ngubane, H., *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine*, 1977, p.13

and, perhaps, earlier. Their striking terracotta sculptures, dating from the fifth and sixth centuries AD, have been found in the eastern Transvaal. By the late eighteenth century, there were three major Bantu subgroups in Africa South of the Zambezi: the Herero of Namibia were atypical in their lifestyle in that they practised pastoralism, but not agriculture, and did not work iron; the Nguni lived on the coastal plain between the Drakensberg mountains and the sea, and the Sotho-Tswana inland, in the mountains and on the Highveld. These were linguistic rather than social groupings, and had much in common, including a passionate attachment to cattle¹⁶.

Mfecane is a Zulu word that means grinding. It is conventionally used for a great complex of migrations that had their origins in wars among the northern Nguni in the late eighteenth century. Their causes are disputed, and some emphasize the role of European trade in slaves and ivory, but it is clear that the background was, at least in part, ecological, the pressure of expanding population hemmed in between the mountains and the sea. To the South, expansion was prevented by another group of pastoralists, hungry for cattle and land: the Afrikaner. The southernmost Nguni, the Xhosa, were driven back across the Fish

¹⁶ Elizabeth Isicher, *op cit.*, p.101

River, which became a boundary between white and black pastoralists. The need which both communities had for land led to a series of wars, which some have called a Hundred Years War.¹⁷

The Zulu built up a powerful military state among the northern Nguni under Shaka, who met a violent end in 1828. Refugees fleeing south became the Mfengu (the name means 'beggars'), who enthusiastically adopted modernity in all its guises, including Christianity, education, and commercial agriculture.¹⁸

The Ndebele were a Zulu-related group who fled to the Highveld in 1821, led by Mzilikazi (d. 1868). After wars with the Griquas, Tswanas, and Voortrekkers, they moved north to what is now the Republic of Zimbabwe¹⁹.

In their traditional life African peoples are deeply religious. It is religion, more than anything else, which colours their understanding of the universe and their participation in that universe, making life a profoundly religious phenomenon. To be

¹⁷. Ibid., p.102.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹. Elizabeth Iscicher, op cit, p.4

is to be religious in a religious universe. That is the philosophical understanding imbuing African myths, customs, traditions, beliefs, morals, actions and social relationships. Before nineteenth century, this traditional religious attitude maintained an almost absolute monopoly over African concepts and experiences of life.

Thus, the traditional Zulu religion is closely related to Zulu society and can only be fully understood within the context of Zulu social obligations.

3. The content of the traditional Zulu religion

3.1. The View of God

The Zulus are very conscious of the fact that when they speak of *umuntu*, man, they are referring to an entity which is a living human being. A Zulu medical practitioner, operating immediately outside Durban said at a consultation on the Church's responsibility to the sick Zulu; "Whites have failed to see that in Africa a human being is an entity, not in the first instance divided up into various sections such as the physical body, the soul and the spirit. When a Zulu is sick it is the whole man that is sick, his physical as well as his spiritual being which is

affected". Evidence has strongly underlined how correct the consultation participant was.

Reacting to Bryant's statement that "according to Zulu philosophy man is composed of two parts, the body(*umZimba*, pl. *imiZimba*) and the spirit or the soul(*iDlozi*, pl. *amaDlozi*)"²⁰, an informant agrees that there are the body and the *iDlozi*, but the people are hesitant to accept a clear division between the two. "We do not say, 'Here is the body and there is the shade'. They are together." The unity within man is underlined far more emphatically and consciously than is any division of a human into a possible material and visible part and a spiritual and invisible part.

Suggesting that the spiritual components of a human are invisible caused amazement among many informants. Their immediate reaction was a questioning of what that was, which was spiritual and invisible. To gain insight into their thinking I suggested *idlozi*. "No, we see it. It is not unseen. It is seen. Sometimes we see it often, sometimes less often. But we see it." Shades appearing to survivors in dreams, visions, omens or through the

²⁰. Bryant, A.T., The Zulu Cult of the Dead, in *Man*, vol.17, pp.140-145

medium of a diviner are regarded as being seen, experienced, in a very real sense. Their being intensely experienced through their means of manifestation is sufficient evidence of the shades being obvious and real. They are not abstract or very far away. The shade is the man, not a part of him.

Understanding the oneness of the human being, Zulus readily agree that various parts of the body are recognizable as are various characteristics of the person. Thought-patterns in this respect, however, are tangible. While the schooled Zulus will far more readily accept e.g. *umoya*²¹ as a component of humanity, and Christians accept it as an essential, conservative traditionalists will go so far as to deny that *umoya* has anything to do with man's composition. Indeed among Christians *umoya* is defined in a wide range of approaches. A Roman Catholic Christian at Mapumulo said that *umoya* is "the thing that goes to God when I die", adding that "*umzimba* is a dirty thing which must just simply be buried in the earth". A Congregationalist was of the impression that "*umoya* is the breath. God gave it to us in the creation. He breathed it into us. We can use it nicely or badly.

²¹. Literally, *Umoya* means a 'wind', however, the Zulus also regard it as one of the spirits. See Berglund, A-I., *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1976, p.85

When I die the breath goes somewhere. God knows where it goes". His reflections on *umzimba* were the following: "The *umzimba* is the body. It goes to heaven. The flesh becomes earth. But the body goes to God."

UDali, *uMdali*, and *uMenzi* are used by both the Xhosa and the Zulus to refer to the origin and creation. In Xhosa, *uDali* and *uMdali* are derived from *ukudala*, to make, bring into existence, create, ordain, appoint, and mean the creator, moulder, maker²².

The name 'Great-Great' is the translation of the Zulu word *uNkulunkulu*. This is the name the missionaries subsequently used to refer to God. Another name, *uMvelinqangi*, which Shooter translates as 'First Appearer or Exister', was, in fact, more correctly understood by the Zulu as referring to a supreme creator²³.

In addition, the terms *uHlanga*, *iNkosi yeZulu*, *uMvelinqangi*, *Yise*, *Simakade*, *Guqabadele*, and *uNkhulunkulu* are commonly found among both branches of the Nguni, the Zulu-speaking as well as

²² Janet Hodgson, *The God of the Xhosa*, Oxford University Press, 1982, p.43

²³ S. A. Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p.35

the Xhosa-speaking people²⁴. We have argued, therefore, that these traditional God-names date from before the time when the Xhosa broke away from the parent Nguni body, and could well be of ancient origin. Comparative evidence from other African societies strengthens this view. On the other hand, in pre-Christian times the Northern Nguni or Zulu-speaking people did not identify with the God-names *qamata* and *Thixo*(*Tixo*). These terms were clearly adopted by the Xhosa after they branched off and moved into Transkei and Ciskei.

Many Xhosa regard *Qamata* and *Thixo* as designations of their own, but the implosive consonants or 'clicks' indicate their Khoisan origin. It is not possible to date the time at which these God-names were incorporated into Xhosa religious belief and practice, but the evidence points to *Qamata* predating *Thixo* by a considerable period²⁵.

All the societies in Africa have a consciousness of the highest God. A number of African peoples think of God as self-existent and pre-eminent. Amongst the Zulu we encountered a clear

²⁴. G.C.Oosthuizen, *The Theology of a South African Messiah*, 1976, E.J.Brill, Leiden Netherlands, p.22

²⁵. Janet Hodgson, *The God of the Xhosa*, pp.62-63, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1982

expression of this concept. They give one name to God which means: 'He Who is of Himself' or He Who came of Himself into being'²⁶.

Traditionally, Zulu religion included a belief in a 'high' or 'sky' god similar to the God of Christianity²⁷. This realization leaves us with the question: just what did the Zulu believe about God before the arrival of Europeans?

A similar situation is to be found in other areas of African scholarship. Thus, in his book *'African Religions and Western Scholarship'* (Nairobi, 1970), Okot P'Bitek²⁸ mounts a passionate and reasoned case against common scholarly assumptions about 'traditional' African ideas of God. In his view, Western missionaries and Africans influenced by Christianity have distorted traditional African beliefs beyond recognition. Therefore, in *'Religion of the Central Luo'* (1971), Okot P'Bitek has attempted to reconstruct a traditional belief system without using ideas derived from the Christian tradition. The result is a fascinating, if controversial, work. In the South African

²⁶. Smith, E.W., *African Ideas of God*, 1961, p.109

²⁷. Hexham Irving, *Texts on Zulu Religion*, 1976, p.185

²⁸. Okot P'Bitek, *African Religions and Western Scholarship*, Nairobi, 1970.

context, Gabriel Setiloane has argued a similar case in his provocative *'The Image of God among the Sotho-Tswana'* (1976)²⁹.

The Zulu names for God are uTixo, iTongo, unKulunkulu, unsondo and umvelinqangi. "The old men say that unkulunkulu is umvelinqangi; for they say he came out first; they say he is the uthlanga from which all men broke off. The old men say that unkulunkulu is; he made the first men, the ancients of long ago; the ancients of long ago died; there remained those who had been begotten by them, sons, by whom we hear that there were ancients of long ago who knew the breaking off of the world. They did not know unkulunkulu; They did not see him with their eyes; they heard it said that unkulunkulu was. He came out where men broke off from uthlanga. He begot the ancients of long ago; they died and left their children; they begot others; their sons, they died; they begot others; thus we at length have heard about unkulunkulu. It was our ancestors who told us the accounts of unkulunkulu and of the ancients of long ago".³⁰

Tell me if at the present time there are any who pray to

²⁹ Ibid, p.189

³⁰. Berglund, Axel-Ivan., *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, David Philip, Cape Town, (1976) pp.87-88.

unkulunkulu? "There are none. They pray to the amatongo³¹; they honour them that they may come and save them"

Unkulunkulu is named umvelinqangi. Unkulunkulu or uthlanga or the creator mean one and the same thing.

Unkulunkulu is the Creator, or First Cause³². Zulu people think unkulunkulu made all things or they believe that unkulunkulu broke off from a bed of reeds first, and then all men broke off. "All things as well as unkulunkulu sprang from a bed of reeds, everything, both animals and corn, coming into being with unkulunkulu"³³. He created all wild animals, cattle and game, snakes and birds, water and mountains, including the sun and moon. "[S]ometimes a wife is associated with the original being. They had one name, namely, unkulunkulu"³⁴.

In addition to unkulunkulu, the Zulu believe in a power which they call "Heaven" or "The Lord of Heaven", which is responsible

³¹. Amathongo(sin. ithongo) is one of ancestral spirits which affect the daily life of the Zulus. See Berglund, A-I, op cit., p.89.

³². Krige, E.J, *The Social System of the Zulu*, 1936:280

³³. Callaway, H., *The Religious System of AmaZulu*, 1970:41

³⁴. *ibid*, p.40

for thunder and rain, but whether the thunder is this Lord or merely caused by him is not at all clear.

Many societies like the Akan, Baluba, Ngoni, Tonga and others, speak of Him as 'the Great One', or 'Great God', or 'the Great King', or 'the surpassingly great Spirit'. The Zulu consider Him to be King of kings, or Chief of chiefs, an attribute which conveys supreme authority and absolute power. People believe that unkulunkulu is a god of nations. The word unkulunkulu is also used to denote an original ancestor. It is the name given to the founder of a house, the first ancestor of a family, who is prayed to and worshipped in the usual way.

The Zulus consider their marriage institution and circumcision customs to have been ordered by God. The Zulu teach their children that the Source of being is above, and that it is God Who gives men life and prosperity. Some like the Abaluyia, Akan and Zulu say that God sustains human life, so that without Him mankind would vanish. It emerges clearly that for African peoples, this is a religious universe. Nature in the broadest sense of the word is not an empty impersonal object or phenomenon: it is filled with religious significance. Man gives life even where natural objects and phenomena have no biological

life. God is seen in and behind these objects and phenomena: they are His creation, they manifest Him, they symbolize His being and presence. The invisible world is symbolized or manifested by these visible and concrete phenomena and objects of nature. The invisible world presses hard upon the visible: one speaks of the other, and African peoples 'see' that invisible universe when they look at, hear or feel the visible and tangible world. This is one of the most fundamental religious heritages of African peoples.

3.2. The End of the World

In traditional African thought, there is no concept of history moving 'forward' towards a future climax, or towards an end of the world. The notion of a messianic hope, or a final destruction of the world, has no place in the traditional concept of history. People set their eyes on the Zamani³⁵, since for them there is no

³⁵. According to traditional African concept, time is a two-dimensional phenomenon, with a long past present and virtually no future. Actual time is therefore what is present and what is past. It moves 'backward' rather than 'forward'; and people set their minds not on future things, but chiefly in what has taken place. When Africans reckon time, it is for a concrete and specific purpose, in connection with of events but not just for the sake of mathematics. Many of their religious concepts and practices are intimately connected with this fundamental concept of time. To avoid the thought associations of the English words past, present and future, I propose to use two Swahili words,

'World to Come', such as is found in Judaism and Christianity³⁶.

The majority of the traditional Zulu peoples do not expect any form of judgment or reward in the hereafter according to isangoma Beronica Ndlovu.

3.3. Prayer and Blessing

As a rule, there are no sacrifices without prayers. The majority of prayers and invocations are addressed to God, and some to the living dead or other spiritual beings, many of whom serve as intermediaries. The pronouncing and requesting of formal blessings play an important role in the social and religious life of African peoples. Formal blessings are another aspect of prayer. Rain is, however, the most widely acknowledged token of God's providence. Zulu people believe that rain is the blessing of their God.

3.4. The Supernatural World

'Sasa' and 'Zamani'. Zamani means unlimited past, while Sasa means the period between visual future and memorable past. See Mbiti, J.S., *African Religious and Philosophy*, Heinemann, 1969, pp.16-28.

³⁶. Mbiti, J., *ibid*, p.23

Belief in the continuation of life after death is found in all African societies, as far as I have been able to discover. But this belief does not constitute a hope for a future and better life. To live here and now is the most important concern of African religious activities and beliefs. There is little, if any, concern with the distinctly spiritual welfare of man apart from his physical life.

There are many African peoples who do not visualize any geographical separation between the two worlds, and as soon as a person is physically dead he arrives 'there' in his spirit form. This means that a person is thought to be composed of physical and spiritual entities, and among some societies to these is added a 'shadow', 'a breath' or 'a personality'. Stripping the corpse and burying it completely naked is a concrete externalization of the concept of death as birth into the hereafter. Some of the words describing death imply that a person goes 'home', which means that this life is like a pilgrimage: the real 'home' is in the hereafter, since one does not depart from there. A number of peoples, including the Basuto, Lozi, Lugbara, Shilluk, Turkana and Yoruba, believe that at death the soul of the person goes to the sky or near to God. In many ways the hereafter is a carbon copy of the present life. Although

the soul is separated from the body it is believed to retain most, if not all, of the physical-social characteristics of this human life³⁷.

The ideas of the Zulu about 'Heaven' are even more vague than their conception of unkulunkulu³⁸.

3.5. Salvation

The Zulus do not offer for mankind at large, a way of 'escape', a message of 'redemption' (however that might be conceived). It is in this area that world religions may hope to 'conquer' African traditional religions and philosophy, not so much by coercion as by adding this new element to the two-dimensional life and thinking of African peoples. Only a three-dimensional religion can hope to last in modern Africa which is increasingly discovering and adjusting to an existential, and not only potential, third dimension of time³⁹.

3.6. Worship

³⁷ Ibid, p.157

³⁸. Krige, E.J., *The Social System of the Zulus*, 1936, p.283

³⁹. Mbiti, J., *op. cit.*, p.97

Man's acts of worship and turning to God are pragmatic and utilitarian rather than spiritual or mystical. It is, however, in the many acts of worship that men acknowledge God to be near and approachable. Such acts include sacrifices, offerings, prayers and invocations. Men also associate God with many natural objects and phenomena, indicating their belief that God is involved in His creation.

Out of the widespread feeling of respect which African peoples show in various ways towards God, some feel at certain times that man alone should not, or is unworthy to approach God directly.

According to Mbiti, sacrifices and offerings constitute the common acts of worship among African peoples; and examples of these are numerous. Since these two terms are often used loosely, I shall try to draw a distinction in this thesis. 'Sacrifices' refer to cases where animal life is destroyed in order to present the animal, in part or in whole, to God, supernatural beings, spirits or the-living-dead. 'Offerings' refer to the remaining cases which do not involve the killing of an animal, being chiefly the presentation of foodstuffs and other items⁴⁰.

⁴⁰. Ibid., p.58

Cattle, sheep and goats are used for sacrificial and other religious purposes, and examples of this are found all over the continent. Various colours take on different meanings and uses. Many people regard black as their sacred colour. The Bavenda, Luo, Nandi, Ndebele and Shona people use black animals in religious ceremonies and sacrifice them to God⁴¹.

3.7. Ancestors and Spirits

After the physical death, the individual continues to exist in the community and does not immediately disappear from the people⁴². The appearance of the departed, and his being recognized by name, may continue for up to four or five generations, so long as someone is alive who once knew the departed personally and by name. But while the departed person is remembered by name, he is not really dead: he is alive, and such a person is called the *living-dead*⁴³. These are the 'spirits' with which African peoples are most concerned: it is through the living-dead that the spirit world becomes personal to men. For African peoples the spirits are a reality and a

⁴¹. Ibid, p.56

⁴². Ibid, p.24

⁴³. Ibid, p.25

reality which must be reckoned with. Because of this ontological position, the living-dead constitute the largest group of intermediaries in African societies. This explains, to a great extent, the reason why African respect for the departed is so great and the cult connected with the-living-dead is so deeply rooted in African life and thought⁴⁴. Tribal people and ancestors are one community which consists of the living and the dead⁴⁵.

The real, vital religion of the Zulus is their ancestor veneration. The ancestors take a real interest in their progeny. They guard them from danger and attend to their needs, but in return they require to be sacrificed to.

In African thought, the ancestor is regarded as nearer to God than living relatives are⁴⁶.

All prosperity is ascribed to the favour of the ancestors, misfortune to their anger. But while the living are dependent for their welfare on the dead, the spirits in turn depend upon their living descendants to venerate them and sacrifice to them, for

⁴⁴. Kato Byang, H., *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, 1975, p.74

⁴⁵. Kramer, H., *Christian Mission and other Religions*, p.371

⁴⁶. Allan Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African Context*, Unisa, Pretoria, 1992, p.15

if their dependants were to die out, they would have no house to enter, but would have to eat grasshoppers on the mountainside, a lamentable fate which the spirits would do their best to avoid.

The Zulu people believe that the spirits of the deceased do not live eternally, the spirits vanish after the fourth generation⁴⁷. With the passing of time, the living-dead sink beyond the horizon of the Sasa period. This point is reached when there is no longer anyone alive who remembers them personally by name. Recipients of communication, offerings, and sacrifices in the second and third categories of the dead are regarded as intermediaries between God and men, so that God is the ultimate Recipient whether or not the worshippers are aware of that.

The belief that the spirits of ancestors still exist and that they have some influence on their descendants originates from the understanding that the dead are still living as spirits among the people. African people believe that the spirits of the ancestors watch over their tribes⁴⁸. This concept can help African people understand the protection of the Holy Spirit of Christianity. The most important role that ancestral spirits play in African

⁴⁷. Jeon, Ho Jin, *Religious Pluralism and Mission Policy for other Religions*, p.258

⁴⁸. Muzorewa, G.H., *African Theology*, p.32

traditional religion is to unite the community. The highest God delegates some of his authority to lower gods and the spirits of the ancestors, so African people easily understand the role of the Holy Spirit in Christianity.

3.8. The Cosmos

In his book *Bantu Philosophy*(1959), P.Temples presents his understanding of Baluba religion and philosophy, starting from the attitude that 'primitive peoples have a concrete conception of being and of the universe.'⁴⁹

Man, in some ways, considers himself to be the centre of the universe. The Zulu narrate that when God had created men, He gave them the sun and moon to be their light, so that they could see.

The tribes like the Gikuyu and the Zulu interpret thunder as be the movement of God. Storms are considered by the Shona, Tonga and Zulu to be God's manifestation⁵⁰.

3.9. Humanity

⁴⁹. Placide Temples, *Bantu Philosophy*, Precence Africaine, 1959

⁵⁰. Mbiti, op cit., p.53

It is recognised by Zulu people that God is the Creator of humanity, even though the detail of the process by which humanity is created can be different in the myths of other African tribes⁵¹. There are myths from the Akamba, Basuto, Herero, Shona, Nuer and others, which tell that God brought man out of a hole or marsh in the ground, or from a tree⁵².

The Zulu, on the other hand, believe that God ordered men to farm from the very beginning saying: 'Let there be men and let them cultivate food and eat!'⁵³. This picture of man's origin places man in a position rather different from that of other earthly created things: he comes from 'above', from 'another' region of the universe, from a position 'nearer' to God than that of other things. Thereafter, God withdrew from men, partly because of man's disobedience to Him, partly through human misadventure, and partly through the severing of the link between heaven and earth. The Zulu saw, however, no evidence of man seeking after God for His own sake; or of the spirit of man 'thirsting' after God as the pure and absolute expression of being.

The view of humanity among Africans, like the Biblical view of

⁵¹. Muzorewa G H, *op. cit.*, p.36

⁵² Berglund Axel-Ivar, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, Hurst and Company, 1976, pp.82-83

⁵³. Mbiti, *op. cit.*, p.94

human kind, is holistic⁵⁴. Oduyoye says that the human is a being in some relationship. The character of the human consists of two aspects, one is the relationship with God and the other is the relationship with human neighbours⁵⁵. With this understanding of the human character we can describe the relationship of the vertical and horizontal on the cross of Christianity.

The human character of Africans is interpreted within the concept of a community network. The person who has no community consciousness is regarded as the enemy of the community.

3.10. The View of Death

There are essentially two conceptions of death. Firstly, a "timely" death which presupposes a number of children and grandchildren who survive the deceased. Secondly, there is death which is untimely and is regarded as a serious disruption of the natural course of human life. The quality of such a death is included in the English idioms 'annihilation' or 'extinction'. A "timely" death is expressed in the Zulu language in terms such as *ukugoduka*, *ukudlula*, *ukuhamba* and *umuqubeka*, which all signify a passing on, a continuation. An untimely death is described as

⁵⁴. Allan Anderson, *op cit.*, p.15

⁵⁵. Muzorewa, *ibid*, p.38

ukufa, ukubhubha, and ukugqibuka which imply a breaking off of life⁵⁶.

Ngema was emphatic that physical death, when it comes at the correct time in life, is in itself not evil. It is to be regarded as a natural continuation of man's existence. "When a man has completed his work in that he is old and of ripe age, then he is happy because things have gone well with him. He sees that there will be those that will do his work for him when he has passed on⁵⁷. So he is not fearful because of death. He can even say to his people, 'No, I am now tired of living.' He says this because there is nothing more he can do." Discussions with a great number of Zulus on the issue of death at a mature age indicate that Ngema was not expressing only a personal view but ideas generally representative⁵⁸.

When old people die they are not mourned. "To the old death does not come unexpectedly. We do not mourn them because we knew that it was coming. They were not taken unaware." People expressing sympathy with friends whose aged parents or senior relatives have

⁵⁶ Krige Eileen Jensen, *The Social System of The Zulus*, Longman green and Co., 1936, p.169

⁵⁷ Berglund Axel-Ivar, *op. cit.*, pp.79-80

⁵⁸ Krige Eileen Jensen, *op. cit.*, p.283

passed away show no signs of grief and will say: "We do not say anything. He was of ripe age", or they may say: "Do not complain. It was her turn now. Even the teeth revealed that eating was painful". "You must not weep. Did you not know that he was ready for this thing? So why are you distressed?"

Death of an aged person is not of necessity considered the work of sorcery or witchcraft. It is a natural development and accepted as such⁵⁹.

3.11. Dreams

The important role played by dreams in Zulu thought-patterns cannot be overstressed. Without dreams true and uninterrupted living is not possible. There is cause for anxiety when people do not dream. "These are fearful nights. I do not see anything. Perhaps there may be something(bad)," said a troubled man to a diviner whom he had approached. He felt at a loss as to his condition⁶⁰.

Beside the shades who reveal themselves in dreams and visions,

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.161

⁶⁰ Berglund Axel-Ivar, op. cit., pp.97-98

dreams can be caused by witchcraft and sorcery.

Dreams are a channel of communication between survivors and the shades. In dreams the shades become very real, intimate and concrete. "They come to us at night, very clearly. They reveal themselves. We see them very closely and hear them saying things to us. They are just beside us when they reveal themselves in this way." Their absence in dreams can, as has been stated, cause anxiety. Not only does one experience the lack of dreams as a vacuum in life, but the absence of dreams can also indicate a lack of interest on the part of the shades. The reality of dreams in Zulu thinking does not limit itself merely to the seen and the heard. It includes the experienced also. Pain in the shoulders after a night of dreams is most definitely spoken of as caused by the shades' activities.

4. Priests

4.1. The Classification of Priests

The existence of priesthoods in Zulu societies is firmly established. There are different kinds of traditional doctors (Priests) who do good or harm. They may be classified as follows:

(1) A diviner (isangoma), (2) a herbalist (inyanga), (3) a leader of people seized by a kind of nervous disease (motheketheke) who is called a lethuela, and (4) A rain-maker⁶¹.

Firstly, a diviner(isangoma), called a horned doctor(*ngaka-e-linaka* in southern Sotho), is one who uses divining bones in examining the sick and the invalid. The bones are thrown on the ground and occupy different positions called *maoa*. It is the position of the different bones on the ground which will guide a diviner to the cause of the disease which is always ascribed to witchcraft. Before asking the sick person some questions, the diviner will recite some praises and finally identify the cause of the disease. He does not always tell the truth. He may feel bound to tell a lie because he believes that his people infer that he is ignorant if he will not say that the disease is caused by somebody. I personally asked one diviner why he turned away someone who had come to him to be examined. He said: "I want to have a rest today concerning lies". I asked him: "But why do you tell lies?" He replied: "If I tell the truth as revealed by my divining bones that the disease is natural, people will no more come to me on the plea that I fail to examine." You will understand that most Africans approach a diviner with a belief

⁶¹. Maile, op. cit., p.64

that they are bewitched. Fear of witchcraft leads them to fear what cannot be feared. Again I asked one of the diviners: "Tell me friend. Do your divining bones tell the truth?" He answered: "Never mind that. We aim at getting something for a living."

Before proceeding further it is necessary to know how these horned doctors are taught their divination. A prospective diviner will go to a doctor and ask him to teach him how to use the divining bones. He will be kept in a separate hut. His food and dishes are set apart from those of other people. The doctor gives him a charm called *bolao* to drink. The charm is called *bolao*. One or more doctors will sit in a separate hut and cast their bones which will occupy different positions on the ground. They ask the novice to tell them in what position the bones are scattered on the ground. He may fail a number of times, but later on he will learn to tell. When he is well versed in this kind of wonderful guessing, he will be given the names of the different positions (*maoa*), their praises, the kinds of ailments they refer to and the right medicines to use. Medicine is made of herbs and roots of different plants. Most of the roots are burnt and mixed with fat to be used for incisions made on one's body. Some black powders from burnt roots are simply swallowed⁶².

⁶² Ibid, p.65

Zulu diviners often carry the bag containing divination equipment in the left hand. Fully conscious of doing this, they will go out of their way to take the bag in their left hand, carrying the shield and sticks, which traditionally ought to be carried in the left hand, in the right. Very frequently the divination bones are cast with the left hand.

The set-up of some diviners' homesteads has been the reverse to that of ordinary homes. The main entrance to the homestead is found behind the main hut (*indlunkulu*) instead of opposite the cattle-enclosure gate. For example, Laduma Madela had reversed his wives' huts so that his *ingqadi* wife (right hand wife) occupied a hut to the left of *indlunkulu*, while his *ikhohlwa* wife lived to the right of *indlunkulu* as seen from the gateway at the byre and facing *indlunkulu*⁶³.

Conservative male diviners pass much time in the lower section of the homestead in the vicinity of the cattle-gate, and not in the regions of *indlunkulu* as would be expected of men. They will also entertain guests in a hut set aside for the purpose in the lower end of the homestead, frequently situated to the left of the cattle-gate, if the diviner is a male. In the case of female

⁶³ Ibid

diviners their huts are situated in the upper regions of the homestead, in some cases being *indlunkulu* itself. The diviner at eThelezini had a tuft of grass in the roof-thatching above *umsamo* reversed.

Entering a diviner's hut for consultation, if the diviner is male he often sits to the left of the entrance, to the right if the diviner is a female. Likewise, some male diviners sleep on the left side of the hut, i.e. the women's side, while female diviners sleeping on the right. The diviner of the uMhlatuze valley consciously faced the left side when divining, he himself seated in *umsamo* of the hut because "their(the shades') place, if they were men, would be on the right hand side of the hut. So the people face the other side." Also during the important *isangoma yokuvumisa* in the training of a novice, male diviners and novices sit to the left in the hut in which the dance is conducted, women sitting to the right seen from the doorway of the hut.

Many diviners claim that they see things upside-down. This is said to be the reason for their often leaning their head over to one side "so that we may see the things straight". The diviner at eThelezini said that he saw things upside-down continually.

When he saw things the right way up he would get worried and irritated, take excessive quantities of *imphepho* and call on the shades to restore good order, until he saw things "in the manner of truthful diviners again". The diviner at uMhlatuze also stated that some diviners continually saw things upside-down, but that he for one only did so during divination. To him, seeing things upside-down was a sign that he was divining "according to the revelation given by the shades. Then it is clear that I am not just dreaming, but seeing the things of the shades very clearly".

Through the isangoma's life and practice she is believed to be in direct communication with the ancestors, and hence with the entire spirit realm as conceived by the Zulu. Whenever illness or impending disaster troubles the village, people go to consult an isangoma. If they are not satisfied with the diagnosis of the first one consulted, they may seek a second opinion, sometimes travelling considerable distances to do so. People who come for consultation wait for the diviner to tell them why they have come. They indicate the accuracy of the isangoma's explanation by striking the ground with branches, softly or not at all if it is incorrect, and loudly if the reason given is valid.

The doctor then proceeds to name the illness and to prescribe

certain measures. These may include the slaughter of an animal to appease the ancestors or a visit to a herbalist. Today most diviners are herbalists as well and the required medicines may be obtained directly from them. It is customary for a doctor to acknowledge the help of the ancestors at the place where he digs for his herbal medicines⁶⁴.

The diviner does not go about looking for sick people - they search for him by asking those who might have heard of a better one. The African doctor's training lasts a month or a little more depending on.⁶⁵

The other role of isangoma is that of witch(umthakathi)-doctor. This person is feared by young and old alike⁶⁶. He is somebody whose sole purpose is to harm other people. It is believed that he has power to send a *thokolosi*(a mysterious being supposed to appear to some people and at certain places). This *thokolosi* is invisible to those with whom it has nothing to do; but it is visible to those to whom it is sent to chastise and to strangle. The witch-doctor sends it to persons, their cattle or sheep. The

⁶⁴. Callaway, *op cit.*, 1970, p.219

⁶⁵. Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid

witch-doctor must be called to drive it away by means of his medicines. The witch-doctor sometimes visits persons at night and turns them about in their beds. Of course they do not feel anything except on the following morning when they will feel that their limbs are as stiff as those of people who have travelled long distances. The witch-doctor is further said to have power to send *tlali-mothoana*, literally meaning "a little man of lightning". The belief is that he can so arrange it that a streak of lightning out of an almost cloudless sky can strike a person. Finally he can put his medicine in food or drink and one who partakes of the food or drink is sure to die. For fear of poisoning it has been customary among the Africans that the host will drink first in order to prove that the drink is wholesome.

The second doctor is a herbalist. This one is taught about different plants, how to identify them, and how to use them for different diseases by the diviner⁶⁷. He pays an ox or a cow for his tuition. When a person is ill and comes to him, he will direct him to the diviner or will go for him, and when the diviner has revealed the sickness, he will administer the medicine as he has been taught. A herbalist resembles a chemist nowadays. A herbalist uses his herbs and roots in the same way

⁶⁷ Maile, op. cit., p.65

as used by a diviner.

Thirdly, there is a particular person who is called a leader of people, who is seized by a kind of nervous disease or evil possession⁶⁸. This leader becomes such a person in the following manner: He becomes sick and has perplexing dreams which confuse him so much that people think that he will become insane. When he is in this state he is said to have a "spirit"(umoya). He points out a certain doctor who will cure him. The doctor gives him medicine to calm the confusion and to bring more light to his mind regarding medicines. He takes some time under the care of the doctor and when he is able to find out medicines and the kind of ailments by himself, he is released, he is fully - fledged and can go to the country to practise. When a patient is brought to him he calls some people to sing for him in order to arouse his 'smelling - out' abilities. He stretches out his body and neck and finally smells out the disease. He obtains suitable herbs and roots by himself without consulting a diviner or a herbalist. He distinguishes himself by wearing white beads around the neck and ankles.

The fourth kind of doctor is the rain-maker. This is the person

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.66

who employs atrocious methods. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that not all African rain-makers use identical methods⁶⁹. He, with the permission of the chief, administers a mixture which produces abortion in a woman who is not more than two months pregnant. He takes the foetus and boils it with the flesh of a black goat and certain parts of some wild animal. He puts some herbs in. This mixture is taken by the rain-maker and distributed over the people's lands. If a pregnant woman cannot be found at that time, a child of tender years will be stolen and sacrificed. Today this custom has been eliminated by Christianity, civilisation and the white man's rule. Today people assemble to pray for God for rain. However, it is uncertain what they may be doing in secret.

4.2. Function

Diviners may specialise in various functions. The *izanusu* are specialists in finding lost property; other specialists are characterised as stick diviners, bone diviners and ventriloquists (*abalozu*)⁷⁰.

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ S A Thorpe, op. cit., p.44

Unusual events or others which do not fit into a 'natural' rhythm, such as an eclipse, drought, the birth of twins and the like, are generally thought to be bad omens, or to be events requiring special attention from the community, and this may take the form of a religious activity. To explain that, Africans sought God or a mediator.

People assemble for explanations of misfortune, and sometimes find them in the malice of witches⁷¹. They may exorcise their pain in a way that generates more malice. For example, the Xhosa aristocrat Gcaleka, who founded the lineage that bore his name, was a sickly man who tried to restore his health by killing witches; because he did not recover, he killed more.

Many African people believe in health as the norm, and tend to attribute misfortunes, such as untimely death, to this malice of witches. Various social mechanisms have been devised for discerning witches, and obtaining protection against them. Foreign missionaries who regarded witchcraft as a dangerous delusion could do little to meet these deep-seated needs.

The older African generations believed that most illnesses were

⁷¹. Isicher, *ibid*, p.123

caused by witchcraft⁷². Mental, physical and spiritual ailments were treated by one man, namely a traditional doctor.

This is almost a matter of life and death, and African peoples are not mistaken about the worth of the intermediaries. It is not surprising, therefore, that no idols have been reported in African traditional societies.

Generally, most Africans have no idols because of the concept of the "highest God". Is it possible that the concept of a mediator between man and God has influenced the African to accept easily the understanding of Christ as a mediator? I think that this is the reason why Christianity has spread more widely in Africa than in any other continent.

4.3. Role

The isangoma is not the only person qualified and responsible to maintain communication with the ancestors⁷³. The leader of the visible community, the senior kinsman or lineage head, also performs this role. He could be viewed as a priest or a cult and

⁷². Maile, M.L., *ibid*, p.17

⁷³ S A Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p.45

ritual leader. He is responsible not only for assuring the maintenance of good relationships with the ancestors (e.g. by making appropriate sacrifices), but also for all cultic arrangements. Dates of ritual killings must be arranged with him and he has to see that all parties involved are notified so that they can, if at all possible, be present.

Spirit possession is not always to be feared, and there are times when it is not only desirable but people induce it through special dancing and drumming until the person concerned experiences spirit possession during which he may even collapse. When the person is thus possessed, the spirit may speak through him, so that he now plays the role of a medium, and the messages he relays are received with expectation by those to whom they are addressed.

We may summarize the duties of medicine-men from these and other accounts as follows. First and foremost, medicine-men are concerned with sickness, disease and misfortune. The main duty of mediums is to link human beings with the living-dead and the spirits. The experience seems to generate ultra-human power which gives the medium ability to perform both physical and mental activities that would otherwise be extremely difficult or

dangerous under normal circumstances.

5. Religious Pattern and Special Characteristics

5.1. Location

Mbiti summarizes, in optimistic terms, the fact that all Africans worship God:

Such then are the main "official" places of worship among African peoples: They are used mainly for important occasions. Families or individuals turn to God in acts of worship anywhere, without being bound to the feeling that God should be worshipped at a particular place. He is omnipresent and for that reason they worship him at any place, at any time, where and when the need arises⁷⁴

5.2. Community

The Shona tribe in Zimbabwe refer to their biological father not as "my father" but as "our father".⁷⁵ This custom of language expression has been found in many African societies. In the case

⁷⁴.Byang H Kato, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, Evangel Publishing House, 1975, p.75

⁷⁵. Muzorewa, G.H., *ibid*, p.38

of the Zulu tribe most of the time thanks is expressed not as "Ngiyabonga" (I thank you) but "Siyabonga" (we thank you) even if only one person is speaking. These expressions are examples of their community concepts.

A similar case of these expressions of community concepts in language is also discovered in Korea. Invariably, when Korean people introduce their property and family to others they say "our home", "our mother", "our dog" and "our school". They never use the first person singular. Among the African people an event which has affected a particular person is the experience of the community.

Traditional religions are not primarily for the individual, but for his community of which he is part. Chapters of African religions are written everywhere in the life of the community, and in traditional society there are no irreligious people.

5.3. Ancestral Worship

Lungile Mzobe, who lives in Kwa-Dabeka, near Pinetown, said, "their old mother was believing in the ancestors and they did not experience any problems in their belief and they were the

happiest people". This then is the destiny of man, as far as African ontology is concerned. African religious activities are chiefly focused upon the relationship between human beings and the departed.

5.4. Tribal Religion

Traditional religions are not universal: they are tribal or national. Each religion is bound and limited to the group among whom it has evolved. One traditional religion cannot be propagated in another tribal group.

5.5. Religion of Everyday Life without Sacred Scriptures

One of the difficulties in studying African religions and philosophy is that there are no sacred scriptures. Africans have no creeds to recite: their creeds are within them, in their blood and in their hearts.

They have no sacred scriptures because they do not have writing but their faith is living in their culture, art and community life as a living religion.

5.6. Communication with Ancestors

In African (Zulu) society when a person dies his/her life is not regarded as being finished. The dead (ancestors) still exist and can communicate with the living people. The communication with the dead is still alive in the ceremonies of the people. In other words, the living honour the dead who are offered a share in the sacrifice which varies according to economic circumstances but is usually a beast. Should an animal not be acceptable to the ancestors, this will incur angry retaliation such as illness or economic want.⁷⁶

Retaliation is not the only way in which ancestors may communicate with the living but they also may appear as symbols of good fortune. In addition they may manifest in a punitive aspect in dreams which demand a response from the living to repair the damage and restore ancestral benevolence. Ancestors may also react against any breach of the social order which they support, particularly if it is damaging to the relations between kinsmen. I can see similar concepts in Oriental countries especially in areas where Confucianism is believed in. The

⁷⁶. Prozesdy M and de Gruchy J. (eds), *Living Faith in South Africa*, 1995, pp. 22-23

Oriental people believe that when they worship ancestors the ancestral spirits come to the place of worship and take the food which is provided by the living and then they return to their spiritual dimension.

6. EFFECTS AND EXECUTION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF IN AFRICANS' LIFE

African people are obviously religious and each people has its own particular set of practices and beliefs. Religion is the most powerful element in the traditional background and has a marked influence on the thinking and way of life of the people. Therefore, to be without religion amounts to a self-excommunication from the entire life of society, and African peoples do not know how to exist without religion.

In his book *Principles of Sociology*⁷⁷ (1885), anthropologist Herbert Spencer used the phrase *ancestral worship* to describe speculation that 'savage' peoples associated the spirits of the dead with certain objects, and in order to keep on good terms with the spirits of their ancestors, people made sacrifices to them. But it is wrong to interpret traditional religions simply in terms of 'worshipping the ancestors'. Libation and the giving of food to the departed are tokens of fellowship, hospitality and

⁷⁷. Spencer, Hebert, *Principles of Sociology*, 1885.

respect⁷⁸. To see them only in terms of 'ancestor worship' is to isolate a single element, which in some societies is of little significance, and to be blind to many other aspects of religion.

Western missionaries, anthropologists, journalists and scholars who keep harping about 'ancestor worship' should look at or consider cemeteries in their home countries and see how many flowers, candles, and even photographs of the dead, are placed on the graves of relatives and friends⁷⁹.

Other writers have tried to study or refer to African religions in terms of magic. Some consider magic to have evolved before religion. When man failed to control natural objects and phenomena by means of magic, he then resigned himself to forces beyond him. Magic is considered to be the mother of religion.

A careful examination of the situation in African societies shows that magic is part of the religious background, and it is not easy to separate the two, so long as magical acts are beneficial to the community involved⁸⁰.

⁷⁸ Mbiti, op. cit., p.8

⁷⁹. Ibid, p.9

⁸⁰. Ibid.

This is an example which shows how divining has been incorporated into the Zulu people's life-style. When my car was stolen in January 1996 in Clermont, which is a township of Pinetown in Natal, the interpreter of my preaching, Vusi Hadebe, told me to go to a Zulu diviner or sangoma to find out where my car was and who the thieves were. He said that the diviner knew the location of the stolen car. In this respect, it should be said that African traditional religion has been customised and embedded in the everyday life among African people.

Since Africans do not dissociate religion from other departments of life, traditional African religion was life-affirming⁸¹. The benefits it sought were long life, health, good crops, children, and protection from evil.

When a death occurs, all people who attend the funeral or handle the dead body are obliged to wash their hands with water into which agave and aloe are cast. The purpose is to wash off their uncleanness caused by the death in question. The cleansing rite of the funeral ceremony shows that religion and life are one among the African people.

⁸¹.. Isicher, E., *ibid*, p.123

In traditional Zulu religion a goat is killed one day after burial in order to wash away any ritual impurity from the tools used in connexion with the burial, and from the people who have touched the corpse. In traditional Zulu religion, the *ukubuyisa idlozi* ceremony (bring back the shade of a deceased person) is of great importance for the clan. By this ceremony a deceased kraal-head is finally incorporated into the group of ancestors. The rites are performed two to four years after his death⁸². An ox is killed as a sacrifice on behalf of the deceased, special care being taken over the gall bladder of the sacrificial beast, as gall is particularly delectable to the spirits. Gall is scattered over the feet of the sons of the deceased. The chief's son is given the gallbladder of the spirit-beast; this has to be worn on the wrist. The smell of gall will attract the spirits, who will then surround his bed in order guard him against all lurking dangers of the night. The *ukubuyisa* ceremony guarantees the help of the deceased not only for the chief's son but for the whole lineage.

God is often worshipped through songs, and African peoples are very fond of singing. Many of the religious gatherings and

⁸². Bengt Sundlker, *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists*, 1976, p.269

ceremonies are accompanied by singing which not only helps to pass on religious knowledge from one person or group to another, but helps create and strengthen corporate feeling and solidarity. When African people are singing and dancing, it is not only to appease the gods, but also for their own pleasure.

CHAPTER TWO: THE GROWTH OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. The Spreading of the Gospel, the History of Church Development and the Separation of Churches

The missionary enterprise in South Africa is often dated from the arrival of the first London Missionary Society (LMS) representative, van der Kemp, in 1799. Warlike rulers, such as the Zulu or Ndebele kings, tended to tolerate missionaries, for diplomatic and other reasons, but prevented large-scale conversions. A number of Tswana rulers became Christians, of whom the most famous was Kgama, who ruled the Ngwato from 1875 to 1923. Even so, by the middle of the twentieth century, many Tswana were still traditionalists.

At the heart of the missionary enterprise lay a dilemma: to what extent should converts adopt western 'civilization'? Faith Missions, fearful that converts would be motivated by material factors, claimed that African culture should remain unchanged, but the social implications of conversion were far reaching¹. One could not introduce Christianity without changing the host

¹. Isicher, E., A History of Christianity in Africa, 1995, p.93.

society. None had a more sophisticated awareness of these dilemmas than John Colenso, the embattled Bishop of Natal. He opposed the belief that non-Christians are doomed to Hell, defended polygamists, and respected the positive qualities in Nguni life.

An occasional expatriate missionary, invariably criticized by his fellows, attempted to share the lifestyle of the poor, where central mission boards advocated black pastors and chatechists. For example, Van der Kemp married a Khoi wife, and lived on the verge of destitution in the Eastern Cape until his death in 1811. In the long run, the pattern of African Christian life, and its relationship with western education and technology, were not for white missionaries to determine. African individuals explored a variety of options. Some sought western education and technology without Christianity, while others reacted against white hegemony by founding independent churches. In doing so, they not only enriched the African expression of Christianity and its global development, but also contributed to an ongoing process of emancipating Christian thought and praxis from the domination of European concepts and values.

As the nineteenth century neared its end, there was a growing

hostility to educated Africans in their role as actual or potential church leaders. The destruction of the Niger mission is the most famous case of this. Where there was a White community, settler congregations held aloof from African ones. In 1846, the first Methodist Sunday school in Pietermaritzburg taught black, white, and brown children. By 1880, Black, and White Methodists worshipped apart. Following immigration of the Whites into South Africa the development of the Christian church in South Africa led to the development of three major sects: mission church, white church, and independent church. South African churches have divided and developed along these sectoral principles.

Missionaries in earlier times had difficulties in converting African people to Christianity. However, there was a group of African people who had eagerly co-operated with missionaries. As a result, there were many Black missionaries. For example, Cupido Kakkerlak was a Khoi who grew up on a Dutch farm and gradually became involved in full-time mission work. A Xhosa ruler's son, Dyani (Jan Tshatshu), spent years at Bethelsdorp with his wife Noetha, and became a notable interpreter and preacher.

When, in 1829, the indigenous people in the Cape were given land

at the Kat River, they chose James Read as their minister. It was the first independent black church, as distinct from mission, in South Africa.

Very few Zulus became Christians, largely because converts were, in effect, excluded from Zulu citizenship as the mission congregations consisted largely of Christians from Natal and mission employees². The Zulu and Ndebele sought to profit from the presence of missionaries. The first missionary endeavours among the Zulu were undermined by the latter's wars with the Afrikaners.

2. The Growth of the South African Church

2.1. The Growth of the Mainline White Church

The Whites brought the Christian faith from Europe, and since the beginning of the 19th century numerous mission societies have come from the countries in the Northern hemisphere bringing the 'good news' of Jesus Christ to the south. A multiplicity of young churches was constituted during the next two and a half

². *ibid*, p.114

centuries.³

Since 1652 when Jan van Riebeeck landed at the Cape and started the settlement under the Dutch East India Company, the Dutch Reformed Church, originally referred to as the 'Gereformeerde Kerk' or the 'Hervormde Kerk' or simply as the 'Kerk', was the accepted State Church. No other denominations were allowed to establish themselves at the Cape under the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie), except the Lutheran Church, which was granted permission to serve the colonists from 1779. Only in 1824 was the first Dutch Reformed Synod constituted. English rule was established at the Cape in 1795 and continued till the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Subsequently, in 1962, South Africa became a Republic.⁴

Between 1824 and 1900 several other major denominations were established at the Cape. For the most part these denominations were attached to their 'home churches', but they soon developed towards independence. In 1838 White churches confessed their statement of faith. Voluntarily the churches in one area join

³. Elfriede Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa 1936-1960 with special reference to the mission of the Church*, Thesis of Stellenbosch Univ., 1971, p.87.

⁴. Ibid

together in a local "Association".

The Baptist Church in South Africa has been comparatively active in mission endeavours in South Africa, although the membership increase has not been great. On the ecumenical front the Baptists can be grouped with the more conservative churches which have not made notable advances in ecumenical relationships nor major statements as regards the racial issue.

The growth revealed in the Baptist Union is also in line with the curve of growth of the Pentecostal Churches throughout the world. In South Africa the missionary fervour of the Baptist Church is related to that shown by the Apostolic Faith Mission.⁵

It would be well to emphasise that some of the smaller churches are playing a significant role with regard to ecumenism and also in other respects in South Africa. These smaller churches are numerous, and would not, in our context, justify a detailed study.⁶

The smaller churches include: Christian Brethren, 2450; Church

⁵. Ibid, p.88

⁶. Ibid

of Christ Mission, 4700; Church of the Nazarene, 20355; Elim Church, 2800; Full Gospel Church of God, 141000; International Church of the Four Square Gospel, 5611; New Church in South Africa, 18500; Norwegian Free Evangelical Mission 2000; Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, 60000; Pentecostal Holiness Church, 20000; Pilgrim Holiness Church, 4000; Salem Mission, 2375; Salvation Army, 29200; Scandinavian Independent Baptist Union, 4000; Seventh Day Adventists, 39454; Swedish Alliance Mission, 20000; Swedish Holiness Mission, 5000. The Church of England in South Africa with a membership of 32500 (30000 are Africans) is identical to the CPSA as regards its confessions and structures, but has preferred, for various historical reasons, to be a separate church.⁷

The White population of twentieth-century South Africa was to consist of two distinct groups, the English-speaking people, and the Afrikaners. During the nineteenth century, Dutch evolved into Afrikaans, the Taal, with African and Malay loan words and simplified syntax. Christianity was an important dimension of Afrikaner identity, and, in the eighteenth century, it was often used as an ethnic term.

⁷. Ibid

2.2. Mission Church

Virtually every sect and denomination in Europe, Britain and America, has initiated missions in Africa. Here we must note that Christian missionaries from Europe and America penetrated into the interior of Africa either shortly before, or simultaneously with, colonial occupation. At the outset, mission Christianity was not, prepared to face a serious encounter with either the traditional religions and philosophy or the modern changes taking place in Africa. The Church here now finds itself in the situation of trying to exist without a theology. A fundamental cause which perhaps is not easily evident, is that mission Christianity has not penetrated sufficiently deeply into African religiosity.

According to Mbiti⁸, both Welbourn and Ogot write that the Protestant and Roman Catholic forms of Christianity have meant separating the Africans from their society and putting them on the side of Europeans evidenced by taking European names, joining mission Churches, receiving literary education and hoping for promotion in the mission or government. This form of Christianity made no positive attempt 'to incorporate ancestors and witches,

⁸. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1969, p.231

song and dance, into the Christian scheme'.

In 1911, there were over 30 missionary societies and 1650 missionaries in South Africa. However, for much of the nineteenth century, the missionaries often had curiously little success. Livingstone became an explorer largely because he was discouraged by the lack of converts in his southern Tswana mission station⁹. George Schmidt, a Moravian, was the first missionary to the Khoi. He reached at the Cape in 1737. When more Moravians arrived in 1792, they met one of his converts, an eighty-year-old Khoi woman called Helena, with a cherished Dutch New Testament. The ethnically mixed communities of the South African frontier welcomed Christianity.¹⁰

The Orlam were a group of Khoi, and former slaves who escaped to the Orange River area in the late eighteenth century; their name is a Malay one. The Griqua were another group of mixed descent who settled West of the junction of the Orange and Vaal rivers. The missionary, William Anderson, lived with them for twenty years from 1801.

⁹. Isicher, E., *ibid*, p.100

¹⁰. *Ibid.*, p.101.

John Philip(1777-1851) went to South Africa at the request of the London Missionary Society to deal with a crisis. He remained there, 'the Protestant Pope', until his death. Theophilus Shepstone, in charge of 'native policy' from 1853 to 1875, maintained white hegemony by constructing a largely artificial mosaic of tribal jurisdictions, which were a forerunner of modern Bantustans. Into this complicated situation came a great influx of missionaries: Immaculate (who made no converts in Natal at all), the Anglicans (destined to be riven by a spectacular schism), Scottish Presbyterians, and members of the American Board of Missions.

The Anglicans did likewise among the Shona. They arrived in 1891, although it was five years before they baptized their first convert. Some farmers turned to Christianity in search of a superior spiritual technology that might succeed where all else failed. The missionaries encouraged this.

Missionaries presented Christianity, as we have seen, in a particular cultural packaging, closely identified with literacy, so that 'reader' was a synonym for 'Christian'.

The famous educational complex at Lovedale played an incalculably

important role. Its teaching staff and student body were drawn from both blacks and whites and, by 1887, it had taught over two thousand Africans, 538 of them women. Equally, the Improvers published newspapers in English, and in African languages. A nascent literature in English, and in African languages crystallizes their ambiguity and suffering.¹¹

The education of a black child cost one tenth or less less of that of a white child. In the 1930s, half of all African children did not go to school at all, and only 0.6 per cent of those that did went beyond standard six. Virtually all African schools were run by missions.

When a missionary preached a sermon on human equality, an angry king told the interpreter to stop such lies. The Ndebele were afraid of being accused of disloyalty, or being blamed for disasters, especially in the light of Lobengula's well-known predilection for executing his opponents as witches. In 1886, Ndebele said, "We like to learn and hear about God and His Word but if we say openly that we belong to the King Jesus, then we shall be accused of disloyalty to Lobengula and of Witchcraft and killed".

¹¹. E. Isicher, *op cit.*, pp.302-303

Another difficulty of the growth of the South African church is well described by Sundkler¹². He insists, in his book, that the drastic regression of the number of catechumens and adult baptisms since 1930s onward is closely related to the 'breakaway movement' of the black pastor in Ceza area of Zululand.

2.3. The Growth of an Independent Church

2.3.1. Definition of an Independent Church

Perhaps the most serious phenomenon of Christianity in modern Africa is the growth of independent or separatist Churches. At least thirteen per cent of the Christians in Africa belong to these independent Churches.

At this point we might also sketch some of the main characteristics of these African church movements, as depicting one form of Christianity in this continent.

Paul Makhubu criticises the bureaucratic approach towards African Independent Church elsewhere.¹³ He argues that most of the time

¹². Sundkler, B., *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists*, 1976, pp.244-246

¹³. Paul Makhubu, *Who are the Independent Churches?*, Skotaville Publishers, Johannesburg, 1988, p.1.

they are not even regarded as churches or denominations. Rather they are considered to be mere sects or movements of some kind. He regards the African Independent Church as a formal church or denomination. He says, "We see ourselves as part of One Church which is the Body of Christ. He died for us and we acknowledge Him as Lord and Saviour".¹⁴ Under this background, he defines an African Independent or Indigenous Church as a "purely black-controlled denomination with no links in membership or administrative control with any non-African church".¹⁵

Whatever else might be said in general about the Independent Church movements in Africa, they are, in their own ways, attempts by African peoples to 'indigenize' Christianity and to interpret and apply it in ways that, perhaps spontaneously, render Christianity both practical and meaningful to them.

The brief exposition of the history of African ecclesiastical independence will provide the background to Ethiopianism. African Independent Christianity in South Africa from its origin took the form of Ethiopianism¹⁶. And until the 1950s the Ethiopian-type

¹⁴. Ibid.

¹⁵. Ibid., p.5

¹⁶. Ibid, p.10

churches formed the majority of the AICs. Their growth remains steady. The Ethiopian-type churches have a more enlightened leadership, to which other AICs look for direction.

The fact that established Christianity gave the impression of separating religion and daily personal needs is one reason for the proliferation of the indigenous churches in Southern Africa of which there were 30 in South Africa in 1913, 800 in 1948 with a membership of 9% of the African population, 2,000 in 1960 with 18% of the African population and 3,270 in 1980 with nearly 30% of the Black African population in South Africa.¹⁷

2.3.2 The Origin of an Independent Church

At least two thousand churches in South Africa have a name that includes Zion. It derives ultimately from the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church, with its headquarters in Zion City, near Chicago, founded by John Alexander Dowie (d. 1907), a church which catered especially for the urban poor.

The first African Independent Church on the continent of Africa

¹⁷. Elfriede Strasberger, op cit., p.92

was founded in Zaire around 1870¹⁸. The earlier reactions from the missionaries and church leaders considered this development of the African independent churches as evil, a retrogression towards paganism and a political nuisance¹⁹. Many of the early churches were severely persecuted.

The notable early secession, and the first in Southern Africa, was that of the Hermon congregation in Lesotho, breaking away from the Paris Mission in 1872. In 1882, Nehemiah Tile left the Wesleyan church and started the Tembu National Church with the assistance of the Tembu Paramount Chief.²⁰ Almost all the African Independent Churches that were formed during these years were tribal churches. In 1885 at Taung (Batswana settlement) an entire village left the London Missionary Society at the instigation of the local chief, Kgatlampe, and formed the Native Independent Congregational Church. In 1889 J A Winter of the Berlin Mission working in the Northern Transvaal instigated and led a secession from the Lutheran Church and helped to form the Bapedi Lutheran

¹⁸. *ibid*, p.6

¹⁹. *ibid*, p.7

²⁰. Hinchliff Peter, *The Church in South Africa*, S.P.C.K. London, 1968, pp.90-91

church²¹. An evangelist, Khanyane Napo formed his own church in 1889. He named it the African Church²².

Racial segregation in churches had been common for many years, and it had offended blacks.

The very manner of the introduction of Zionism into Swaziland was nothing if not providential. About 1913 a young lady teacher, no ordinary woman, by the name of Johanna Nxumalo, became the first Zionist convert. She belonged to one of the most influential families in the realm and was in fact a sister of Lomawa and of Nukwase, both successively Queen Mothers. From the very beginning, this relationship was bound to forge a link between Zion and the King in Swaziland.

In the case of the Zulus, this was one principal consequence of the Zulu war of 1879 and the partition of Zululand. Twenty years later, there followed the Boer War. There is a connexion between the Bantu Refugee Camps after that war and the flaring up of apocalyptic visions in the very first Zulu Zion community. They were sons and daughters of proud Zulu clans with a famous past, related to royalty and martial glory. Now suddenly, they had lost

²¹. Inus Daneel, *Quest for Belonging*, Manbo Press, Gweru, Zimbabwe, 1991, p.48.

²². *Ibid.*, p.49

that identity and found themselves without any earthly hope as miserable serfs on Boer farms.

The Boer war was followed in 1903 by a severe drought, and for several months the whole country lived on American mealies. At this point Zion showed these Africans that the reward for their labour was shockingly inadequate. As a group, integrated and carried by a new religious conviction which had set them apart from the faith of their masters, they were made bold enough to protest²³.

Le Roux was a Zionist missionary. In 1903, the Zion group comprised at least one hundred and fifty. Le Roux himself estimated that he was followed into Zion by three-quarters of the Zulu members of the Wakkerstroom Dutch Reformed congregation. The remaining fourth preferred to remain loyal to the religious tradition of their farm employers²⁴.

For months after the war they were still concentrated in Refugee Camps. I suggest that some of these might well have functioned as breeding-grounds for apocalyptic visions. Zionists at

²³. Sundkler, B., *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists*, 1976:43

²⁴. Allan Anderson, *Moya op cit.*, p.26-27

Wakkerstrom and Charlestown may have been conditioned by such ideas. Reference should be made to such leaders as E.M.Mahlangu and Steven Mavimbela²⁵. Mahon's Sotho Zionists of Ladysmith belonged to the same category.

Mzimba's Church, or the African Presbyterian Church, founded by P.J.Mzimba in 1898, when he seceded from the United Free Church of Scotland, was tribal in the sense that only the Fingos, and not the Xhosas, went with him.

Behind the independent movements in South Africa stands also an American Independent Movement, namely, the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion founded in 1896²⁶. Black Zionism among American Negroes was inspired by the Universal Negro-Improvement Association and African Communities Imperial League, founded by the Jamaican Marcus Aurelius Garvey, 'the greatest black prophet and visionary since Negro emancipation'.²⁷ He thought of himself as the Moses of the Negro race and his fanatical racialism brought him into conflict with Dr. W.E.B.Du Bois, 'the "father"

²⁵. Allan Anderson, *Bazalwane African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Unisa, Pretoria, 1992, p.41-42 and p.98

²⁶. Sundkler, 1961, p.40

²⁷George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism?*, Dennis Dobson, 1956, p.87

of Pan-Africanism, the rival political ideology to Garvey's Black Zionism.²⁸ Garvey adopted the Black Christ and Black Madonna as symbols of his African Orthodox Church.

2.3.3 Some Reasons for the Establishment of an Independent Church

The scandal of division in Protestant mission Churches had set an example to African converts. The denominational differences of European Christianity empowered Africans to make new choices of their own. One of the factors that sparked off separatism from mission Churches was the control that missionaries exercised over their African converts and congregations.

The Ethiopian churches were founded as a protest against white domination, which was exercised in a variety of ways: in the ceiling imposed on the aspirations of African church employees; in the readiness with which Africans were expelled, especially for plural marriage, and in the growing segregation of black and white congregations²⁹. The denominational differences of European Christianity empowered Africans to make new choices of their own.

²⁸ *ibid*, p.89

²⁹. Isichei, E., *ibid*, p.125

The Tembu National Church was founded by Nehemiah Tile in 1884. Like many later Ethiopians and Zionists, he was originally a Methodist. He fell out with the white missionaries over activities that included 'taking part in political matters, stirring up a feeling of hostility against magistrates in Tembuland, addressing a public meeting on a Sunday'.

In North America, there was renewed religious activity among the black people. These revivals inspired black church leaders and members in Southern Africa.

Another cause for breaking away, or the coming into being of independent churches, was the uneducated state of the ordinary Black. The first Dutch settlers worshipped together with servants, but later separate services became necessary for obvious reasons: the Dutch language was not easily followed by the servants or slaves.

Another reason was supposedly hygienic. The coloureds or blacks were not as clean in manners and clothing as their western masters. In social life, and working situations, they were different.

The independent churches are in a sense an expression of the

desire to worship in freedom. They are an expression of protest against oppression. The religious congregation provides the only place where a black person can express freely his or her feelings emotionally, in singing, dancing, shouting, laughing and even crying. This could not be done in most of the mainline mission churches.

The independent churches were born out of bitter experience and the cry of freedom. Like the negro slaves in America, farm labourers were forced to be members of the church of their masters. Anybody belonging to an independent church had to move out. AICs were not regarded as churches, but subverters of the people. As a result, even today, many blacks have dual church membership, being mainline church members by day and independent church members by night. They want freedom of worship, and close-knit caring fellowship and the release of praying together aloud. The healing prayers for the sick, and especially the touch of hands when praying for the sick, is a powerful attraction.

2.3.4 The Ethiopian Church

The 'Ethiopian-type' churches were the first AICs in Southern

Africa³⁰. They are the earliest breakaways from the missionary churches, mainly on nationalistic grounds. Today their existence is obscure to many because there is usually nothing conspicuous which distinguishes them from the mainline churches. As the white churches have become more concerned about race relations in this country, the number of educated and articulate black people grows. Therefore, many mainline churches have been forced to accept black people into leadership positions. In this way some of the earlier causes of Ethiopian schism have been eliminated.

For the history of African Independent Churches one has to depend on whatever is still available in oral tradition to verify most of what has been recorded by missiologists. The Ethiopian-type churches were the pioneers of initial manifestations of church independence in Southern Africa.

The name of the Ethiopian church was inspired by Psalm 68:31 'Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God'. At this time Ethiopia was symbolic for black nationalists and black leaders, including, Khanyane Napo, S J Brander, Jonas Goduka and James Dwane. Dwane was the most gifted amongst them and soon

³⁰. Makhubu, P., *ibid*, p.5

emerged as the guiding light³¹.

The two older types of Independent churches are the Ethiopian and the Zionist. While the Ethiopian groups are "orthodox" in teaching, the Zionists have retained some elements of traditional African paganism along with a rather Pentecostalist kind of Christianity. There is a third type, Messianism.

There were other similar movements elsewhere including one notable schism in Sekukuniland in the Transvaal. Here a white missionary of the Berlin Society, called Winter, led the seceders. He maintained that missionaries treated even educated Africans as inferiors and that it was necessary to create independent Churches which could be governed by Africans.

In 1892 a Methodist minister called Mangena Mokoni set up his Ethiopian Church in the Transvaal because he believed that Africans were not being accorded equal rights with Europeans within the Methodist organisation. This was the first time the word Ethiopian was used in connection with a seceding body. However this schism was different from earlier secessions which were national in the tribal sense whereas the Ethiopian church

³¹. E., Isicher, op cit., p.127

was national in a racial sense, aiming at being the religious organisation for all Africans in the sub-continent³².

The separatist movement has grown rapidly in the twentieth century. In 1904 it was thought that there were only three independent bodies with a total of 25,000 followers. By 1925 there seemed to be about 130 sects, whereas the census of 1946 gave the number of approximately 1,300 with some 1,100,000 followers. The number of sects is now reckoned to be well over 2,000 although figures are always approximate because of the discrepancy between unofficial and officially recognised bodies³³.

By 1900 Ethiopianism was rapidly growing although the numbers of followers were still small compared with other churches. It was believed by many that secessions were necessary because Africans were being intimidated by Christianity. Ethiopianism stood for a rejection of White domination³⁴.

Independent Church growth in South Africa began in 1872, when 158

³². Peter Himchliff, *The Church in South Africa, S.P.C.K.* London, 1968, p.91

³³. Ibid, pp.92-93

³⁴. Ibid, p.93

Sotho Christians left the Paris Evangelical Mission in Hemon. It was 'the beginning of that pernicious revolt against European guidance, now known as the Ethiopian movement'³⁵.

In 1892, Mangane Mokone and others founded the Ethiopian Church, estranged from the Methodists by the fact that black and white met separately at a missionary congress.

Ethiopia's victory over Italy at the battle of Adowa in 1896 had, at least for the educated, a profound symbolic meaning that strengthened the Ethiopian cause. The Tembu Church soon joined it. As for early nationalists, it was by no means obvious whether the appropriate unit of action was the ethnic group, the colony, or something still larger.

The Ethiopian churches were modelled on those their leaders had left, and were often little different from them, though they sometimes accepted plural marriage. Insofar as their goals were political, they were superseded by the African National Congress. The Ethiopian churches were founded by and for the urban and educated, and their heyday was between 1880 and 1920.

³⁵. R.N.Cust, *An Essay on the prevailing methods of evangelising the non-Christian world*(1894), quoted in Oliver, *The missionary Factor in East Africa*, p.25.

In the phrase 2.3.2 (p.67) of this chapter, we considered the African Improvers, some of whom founded Ethiopian churches. What is remarkable is that their dreams endured so long. Men such as Chief Albert Luthuli, Professor Z.K. Matthew, and the physician A.B. Xuma were its heirs. They clung for decades to a dream of a multiracial democracy, and a just society, to be attained by non-violent means.

2.3.5 Zionist Churches

People associate the African independent churches with Zionists. This is an important group because it represents unique and extreme variations of the African independent churches with regard to orthodox Christian theology³⁶.

The churches that flourished, and now count their adherents in millions, were not founded to protest against white hegemony, or enhance the career opportunities of African church professionals. Their prophets began with visions of an unseen world, and the quest for healing of mind and body. Looking towards an eternal city, they called themselves *ama-ziyoni*, people of Zion.

³⁶. Makhubu, P., *ibid*, p.10

Many of the poor left the mainstream churches to follow one of the Zionist prophets. Over the last twenty years, many, especially among the urban young, have abandoned Christianity altogether, but millions of black Christians have remained in their older churches, despite a degree of alienation.

The Zionist churches proliferated, developing rich, distinctive lives of their own, quite independent of European influences.

The clothing that they wear make Zionists easily identifiable: by the long white dress, girdles, with crosses and sometimes with the star and moon-shaped ribbons or patches sewn on their backs. They can sometimes be seen carrying bundles of sticks tied together with a sash of wool cords. Zionist church services are characterized by drum-beating. Zionist men usually do not shave their beards and hair. They seek the image of the prophets of old. It is common to find groups of Zionists at riversides, near dams or at sea-shores performing their cleansing ceremonies.

The Zionist-type of AIC developed later than the Ethiopian-type in the South African ecclesiastical community³⁷. Their origin is traced to the USA. In 1896, in Chicago, John Alexander Dowie founded the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church of Zion. The main

³⁷. Makhubu, P., *ibid*, p.10

teachings of the Church were divine healing, trine baptism by immersion, and the imminent second coming of Christ. In addition this church had a missionary vision of reaching out across the Atlantic to the Africans. In 1904 one of the leaders of the church, Daniel Bryant, came to South Africa and baptized the first group of Zionists, twenty-seven men, among whom were the great founders and leaders of the Zionist churches in South Africa.

The splintering of the Christian Apostolic Church of Zion in South Africa resulted in churches which emphasised the teaching of the pioneer groups. Baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues was introduced later by P L le Roux, an Afrikaans pastor who had very close ties with the African independent churches. He himself, who had converted in 1904 received Baptism in the Holy Spirit in 1908 and this phenomenon became the main part of his message³⁸.

Zionist leaders and churches are too numerous to be listed here, but a few warrant being mentioned. They have established themselves in the history of African Independent Churches in South Africa.

³⁸. Paul Makhubu, op cit., p.11

Paul Mabitsela came from a royal family. He was one of the few Zionist leaders who was formally educated. He founded the Apostolic Church in Zion. This became one of the most successful Zionist churches. He died in 1956. The leadership of the church still continues in the family line, and as a result it is popularly known as the Mabiletsa Church.

Daniel Nkonyane is another founder-leader of note. Between 1917-1920 he founded the Christian Catholic Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion. His church developed the same leadership problems as other Zionist churches after his death. Another important church with a large membership is the St John's Apostolic Church. It was founded by Mother Christinah Nku in 1933, following her dramatic vision and healing miracles.

Zionist churches are continuously mushrooming all over the townships and rural areas of South Africa. It is impossible for any researcher or commentator to attempt an estimate of the numbers of the churches.

Had it not been for the leadership problems and disputes, some of the African Independent Churches would be acknowledged as leading churches in South Africa, in terms of numbers alone.

Michael Ngomezulu was singled out for his special spiritual gifts in Zulu Zion. It seems certain that he was the very first to have a vision of the white robes to be worn by those in Zion³⁹.

2.3.6 Apostolic Churches

The Apostolics are commonly confused with the Zionists. They differ from the Zionists in the following ways:

Unlike the Zionists who wear colourful uniforms, Apostolics wear plain white robes, with no inscriptions on them. The leader carries a short silver or brass 'stick'. Like the Zionists the menfolk also do not shave or cut their hair. They do prophesy and lay much more emphasis on the visions.

They do not use drums in their worship services⁴⁰. Their methodical, hand-clapping, smooth-dancing, choral music has impressed not only the other AICs, but even the secular population. Their music is fashionable in the black townships and widely heard in the popular television and radio programmes.

³⁹. Sundkler, E., *ibid*, p.48

⁴⁰. Makhubu, P., *ibid*, p.12

Apostolics are not generally open to ecumenical co-operation with other AICs. More particularly, they tend to look down upon the Zionists. They take part only in joint community occasions such as funerals.

The English word 'apostolic' does not adequately translate the African word referring to this type of church. The common African words used, *dikereke tsa thapelo* would best be translated 'prayer churches'.⁴¹ Perhaps they are termed 'apostolic' in English because they emphasize the re-enactment of the miracles which were performed by the early prophets, and their leaders and pastors are referred to as apostles. A well known example of this type of African Christian faith is the Twelve Apostle Church.

2.3.7 Evangelical-Pentecostal-type Churches

These are splinter groups from the evangelical missions and churches, mainly the Baptist Church, Apostolic Faith Mission Church and the Assemblies of God⁴².

These churches distinguish themselves by emphasizing righteous Christian living. Practices like cigarette-smoking, alcohol and

⁴¹. Ibid, p.13

⁴². Makhubu, *ibid*, p.13

polygamy are prohibited. They differ from their original churches in that some of them allow the wearing of uniforms, observe some African community ceremonies such as the unveiling of tombstones, and unlike the Ethiopian churches they allow for greater freedom of expression of African singing and dancing in their services; they are also more inclined to shy away from involvement in political matters. Most of them do not regard themselves as African Indigenous Churches as such. They are very conscious of their particular denominational uniqueness. Well-known examples are: The African Full Gospel Church, Back to God, Assemblies of God and the Baptist Church of Southern Africa.

Because these churches often attract people from the middle class of society, when they become conscious of themselves as African Independent Churches, they classify themselves as Ethiopian.

2.3.8 Shembe Churches

The most famous Zulu Zion church is Isaiah Shembe's *Ekuphakameni*, the Elevated Place, 10 miles north of Durban. Of his 250 hymns, 50 sing its praises:

I remember Ekuphakameni
where is assembled
the saintly congregation

of the Nazarites.

I remember Ekuphakameni,
where the springs are
springs of living water
lasting for ever⁴³

Isicher analyses that although the Shembe church is a type of Zionist church it is nevertheless unique⁴⁴.

Isaiah Shembe, the founder of the Church of Nazareth (*Isondo lamaNazaretha*) was born into a Zulu polygamous family. Sundkler⁴⁵ gives the year of his birth as 1870. Dube suggests that he was born in about 1867. It is difficult to give the exact dates for such events because the Zulus kept no record of births and deaths.⁴⁶

I wish to examine the differences between Shembe's church and the other separatist churches.

The first marked difference is that Shembe's church is deliberately and unapologetically Zulu. Its declared aim is to

⁴³. Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists*, p.198, 237

⁴⁴. Isicher, E., *ibid*, p.315

⁴⁵. Sundkler, *op cit.*, p.10

⁴⁶. *Ibid*, p.11

maintain Zulu traditional ways of perceiving the world and it has so much faith in this that it believes that God has sent a special messenger to save the Zulus. This is a distinctive feature of the Shembe Church, because if there is one point on which the separatist churches are sensitive, it is on the matter of whether or not they are Christian. They affirm that they are, and in their eagerness to conform to what is considered Christian, they repudiate Zulu cosmological ideas altogether.

Secondly, it is the only church which encourages distinctly African modes of dress. The Shembeites are generally described by other churches as heathens or pagans because they do not dress in western fashion.

Thirdly, the Shembe Church believes in the dance (Zulu style) as a form of worship. No other church does this, and it is one of the features for which it is generally blamed and ridiculed by other separatist churches. To these other churches, a Zulu dance is unchristian and therefore not to be tolerated.

Fourthly, it differs from the other churches in that it accepts polygamy as a form of marriage. This is another reason why the other churches, separatist and mission, denigrate the Shembe

Church.⁴⁷

Although the indigenous African people adopt western culture, therefore, they may experience difficulty because it is foreign, therefore, the religion of uShembe is favoured because it accommodates Zulu culture and tradition.

The Shembeites do not depend on the other churches. They also do not believe in any God except *umvelinqangi* which is the title of their deity. We know that Westerners challenge other culture even though Shembe people claim that Jesus is a Jew and Jesus is the God of Jew. So the Shembeites pray to God as theirs.

According to one minister of the Shembe church whom I interviewed, the Shembe believe in the following customs: they allow polygamy; they have a strong belief in ancestors; they believe that Shembe was chosen by God to represent African people; they do not believe in Jesus because he was chosen to represent the Jews or White people; they wear traditional clothes; they do not cut their hair and they worship in the open air; they do not make fire on Sunday.

⁴⁷. Absolom Vilakazi, Bongani Mthethwa, and Mthembeni Mpanza, *Shembe the Revitalization of African Society*, Skotaville Publishers, Johannesburg, 1986, pp. 155-156.

Isaiah Shembe was a minister of the African native Baptist Church who practised faith healing until several visions compelled him to preach, heal, and drive out demons. In 1911 he started the Nazareth Baptist Church (called Nazarites or *amaNazaretha*), in whose hymn no. 73 (also 154) is found their confession of faith:

- (i) I believe in the Father
of the Nazarites,
who is Almighty;
in the creator of heaven and earth,
and in the holy spirit.
- (ii) And in the holy congregation
of the Nazarites,
and in the communion of saints
at Nazareth⁴⁸

The movement of Shembe-the outcome of the meeting of two cultures and two religions-has developed doctrinally⁴⁹ into a syncretistic post-Christian movement⁵⁰, in which certain external elements of the old Zulu religion find a new emphasis, e.g. 'dancing before the Lord', which echoes the Old Testament. Certain days are set aside for dancing, and at the 'July festival' the Nazarites dance in a dignified and quiet manner as was the case at the Feast of the First-fruits in the Old Testament. These periods of special

⁴⁸. Oosthuizen, *The Theology of a South African Messiah*, p.278-79

⁴⁹. Cf. Lucien Levy-Bruhl, (*Primitives and Supernatural*, tr. Lilian A. Clare, Allen & Unwin, 1936, p.235) speaks about 'the spontaneous, ever-present tendency of primitives to shun what is unfortunate, and to connect themselves with what is successful'.

⁵⁰. Oosthuizen, G.C., (*Post-Christianity in Africa*, C. Hurst and Co., London, 1968) p.36.

festivals are not chosen arbitrarily: they are special periods loaded with numinous power, vital force, in which the Nazarite covenant is renewed. Their raiment is white, which is the symbolic colour of priesthood in Africa (Shembe employed a black veil at his healing ceremonies).

2.3.9 Zionist-Cum-Ethiopian Churches

This is a group that is most difficult to identify and differentiate from others. It is a sect that has skilfully blended some of the practices of the Zionists, the Apostolics and the Ethiopians. This merging is not necessarily in the articulation of their beliefs, but rather in their type of church practice. For example, from the Ethiopian point of view, they are Ethiopian only in terms of church order, and do not exhibit the subtle political consciousness which characterizes Ethiopian Churches. Numerically, the Zion Christian Church is the largest African Independent Church in Southern Africa. Unlike other AICs it is financially self-reliant. I classified this church in the Zionist group, because of the name of the church.

2.3.10 Other Independent Churches

James Read was another LMS missionary who married a Khoi woman. When, in 1829, the Cape Folk were given land at the Kat river, they chose James Read as their minister⁵¹. It was the first independent black church, as distinct from mission church, in South Africa.

In 1898, Pambani Mzimba founded an independent African Presbyterian Church. He was the first ordained minister at Lovedale, and two thirds of his congregation followed him⁵².

In 1942, Job Chiliza(1886-1963) founded the African Gospel Church, breaking away from the (Pentecostal) Full Gospel Church.

Called *Thapelo ya sephiri* (secret prayers) in Sotho⁵³, which are communities of affliction. Those who join tend to do so because they suffer from health problems, and to rise in the organization when they are healed.

2.3.11. The Results of Church Growth

In 1970, the total membership of all South Africa's independent

⁵¹. E. Isicher, *ibid*, p.107

⁵². *Ibid*, p.126

⁵³. *Ibid.*, p.110.

black churches was 3.5 million⁵⁴. In the same year, there were 1.5 million black Methodists, 1330000 black Catholics, 940000 Anglicans and 900000 black Catholics, 9400000 black Anglicans and 900000 of the African branch of the Dutch Reformed Church⁵⁵.

Independent church movement had its beginnings in the late nineteenth century when dissident black church leaders moved out of their mainline or mission churches to begin their own groups. By 1913 there were an estimated thirty separatist churches. By 1955 this figure had grown to 1,200 groups. Today there are an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 such churches. Some of these churches are small and may involve no more than an extended family, while others are very large.

The growth of the African Independent churches has been steady over the past three decades. In 1960 there were 2.3 million followers accounting for 21% of the black population. In 1970 this figure had risen to 2.7 million and in 1980, 4.6 million, accounting for 30.1% of the black population. The incidence of church members is evenly spread between urban and rural areas. The largest of these churches is the Zion Christian Church. The

⁵⁴. Isicher, E., *ibid*, p.305

⁵⁵. Government Census figures from J. de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, p.246

1980 census records a following of half a million, but the church claims membership of three million.⁵⁶

3. The Special Characteristics and Contents of Independent Churches

3.1. The Appearance of Prophet's Group

In the strict biblical sense of *prophets* and the prophetic movement, there are no prophets in African traditional societies. This is mainly because African concepts of time have typically lacked a sense of the future dimension, though there might be other contributing factors. As this dimension is discovered and extended, types of 'prophets' also begin to emerge, as witnessed by the increasing number of 'prophetic' leaders of independent Christian Churches in Africa.

Nxele and Ntsikona were both Xhosa prophets. Nxele called himself the younger brother of Christ⁵⁷. In 1819, after a further British invasion, he led his people to war. He had come to see the world as the scene of a battle between the God of the whites and the

⁵⁶. Elfriede Strassberger, op cit., pp.92-93

⁵⁷. E. Isicher, ibid., p.109

God of the blacks. The latter should be worshipped in dancing, the enjoyment of life and in love, so that blacks would fill the earth, and not 'to sit and sing M'de-e, M'de-e all day and pray with their faces to the ground and their backs to the Almighty'.

Nxele's rival, Ntsikana, moved towards Christianity instead of away from it. He began with a Xhosa mystical experience, which revolved around his favorite ox. Unlike Nxele, he was drawn to give up ochre and traditional dancing, and to send away all wives but one. His memory is still cherished among the Xhosa as that of a saint to whom Christian teachings were independently revealed⁵⁸.

In 1937 Ma Nku had a vision of a church on a particular site near Johannesburg. She would go there to pray, although it did not seem promising as it was European land. Then, the area was redesignated for African housing, and in 1952 she built the church with twelve doors that she had seen in her vision⁵⁹.

Shembe learned to write at the age of forty in order to record

⁵⁸. B.A.Pauw, *Christianity and Xhosa Tradition: Belief and ritual among Xhosa-speaking Christians* (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1975) p.19

⁵⁹. Ibid, p.315

his hymns, which came to him in vision. The prophets often had dramatic, life-changing, experiences, which fostered their greatness, and their visions were expressed and embodied in complex liturgies.

3.2. Growth under Oppression

Two former colonies, the Cape Colony and Natal, and the two former Afrikaner republics formed the Union of South Africa in 1910. South Africa's gold and diamonds remained of crucial importance to international capitalism, and the mines continued to exact their human sacrifices, the victims of accidents and of silicosis, pneumonia, and other diseases. In seTswana, the words for money and blood are same.

The Zionist churches have been joined by millions of South African Christians. They offer an alternative community and individual healing. Although they enrich the lives of man with their liturgies and hymns, they could not heal the inherent illness of a society at war with itself, and many Africans, particularly the young, have condemned their political pacifism.

Although the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 signalled the end of the

independence of the Afrikaner republics, White hegemony remained. Until 1946 the Cape Colony had a "colour-blind" franchise, but factors such as property qualifications meant that the number of Black voters was very restricted and no African was ever elected to parliament. The 1910 Act of Union confirmed the Whites-only franchise of Natal, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State and excluded Africans from standing for parliament. Educated Africans regarded this as a betrayal and a delegation went to the United Kingdom to protest, but in vain.

The members of Independent Churches feel a strong sense of identity with the hidden and persecuted early Church, and include the ancestors, with Christ, saints and angels, in a spiritual community.

3.3. The Features of Growth

The black independent church of South Africa allowed the retention of certain elements of traditional religion, and therefore grew much more rapidly than the mainline churches which continued to uphold and identify with what remained fundamentally Western customs, traditions and practices.

The literal interpretation of the Bible is common among these churches. Some of the leaders are women, and these are fully accepted and respected by their followers.

We noted the process of partial receiving, partial withholding and partial rejection, in the encounter between western Christianity and African traditional societies. We saw clear examples of this phenomenon in the African independent Church movements.

Donald A. McGavran indicated a reason for Indigenous church growth. Natural witness by the whole membership becomes more possible. The naturalness of Christian life and worship, witness and learning, is what told. "Unconscious" witness is perhaps the most potent element in growing churches. When they explain biblical truth, they do so in thought forms and illustrations meaningful to them at their state of culture⁶⁰.

3.4. Conservation of Tradition

The independent Church movements seem to get closer to African traditional aspirations and religiosity than does mission Christianity.

⁶⁰. McGavran, D.A., *Understanding Church Growth*, p.341

The Zionist churches are profoundly indigenized, so much so that some have chosen to regard them as the first local exponents of Black theology⁶¹. They enrich the lives of believers with their liturgies and community life, and often, restore them to health.

3.5. Healing

Healing plays an important role in the independent churches.

According to Milingo's view, healing is more important than a concept of medicine⁶². African Zionist ritual is for the patient.

Healing is a very important feature in independent African churches because new membership in these churches is very often the result of successful treatment. Prophets (*abaprofethi*) perform healings on various occasions such as normal Sunday services, or in connection with special events like baptism, or during festivals. In many cases of healing in connection with baptism these are performed during specialized parts of a service the night before the baptism. A few churches, however, claim that no service takes place before the baptism. In addition healing also takes place in private homes. For Africans all sorts of life

⁶¹. Isichei, E., *ibid*, p.314

⁶². Gerrie Ter Haar, *Spirit of Africa*, Hurst & Company Co., London, 1992, p.134

problems are included. The usual mode of healing is prayer for the sick and laying on of hands. But there are various other methods of treatment as well. Because healing is embedded in religious services we cannot limit our account to the actual moment of healing but must take the total environment into consideration.

The close connection between healing, music, and dance is obvious to everyone who watches a healing ceremony.

3.6. Emphasising of Spirituality

Although Sundkler concentrated on the organizational aspect⁶³, the distinction can be drawn on a number of complementary levels and might better be summarily expressed as "Word" or "Book" religion in opposition to "Spirit" religion, where "Book" and "Sprit" are to be seen as components of religion. But most Independent Churches lean towards one or the other of the extremes of Book or Spirit dominance. Emphasis is also laid on the place and work of the Holy Spirit.

⁶³. Kiernan, J.P., *The Production and Management of Therapeutic Power in Zionist Churches within a Zulu society*, 1990, p.9

Both the Nkonyane and the Mabilitsa traditions of Zion confirm that the leader used to take his people for a time of seclusion onto a mountain.⁶⁴ They would fast there for a number of days and return with renewed spiritual strength.

In some groups Jesus Christ is secondary to the Holy Spirit, and at times there is a lack of distinction between the spirits of the ancestors and the Holy Spirit.

3.7. Emphasising of Offering

The members of Independent Churches take more seriously items like singing and preaching, praying for the sick, exorcisms and the giving of money or other goods to support their leaders and programmes.

3.8. The Role of Women

Women's organizations in the independent churches are strong and autonomous. In South Africa, *Manyano* sect churches enrich the difficult lives of African women in the big cities, often working as domestic servants. Like the Zionists, they rejoice in

⁶⁴. Ibid.

elaborate uniforms, and structures of authority. They are organizations of church women in good standing, and are dominated by the middle-aged. They prohibit both alcohol and plural marriage, and bear a disproportionate share of the Church's financial burdens, sometimes paying the clergyman's salary.

About 60% of Zionist women remain at home during the day and most of these are married women⁶⁵. While their men strive to achieve social recognition in the male world, these women easily establish informal relations with women who do not share their faith, but who share with them common female interests in home and children. Zionist wives engage or implicate themselves in the social relationships that arise out of the division of labour and culturally approved leisure time activities appropriate to their sex.

In her *Black woman in search of God*, Mia Brandel-Syrrier has convincingly shown the emancipating influence which Christianity has had on the life of African Christian females. Referring to Zulu society Sundlker has also stated that the "influence of women leaders in the independent churches is striking evidence

⁶⁵. Kiernan, J.P., *ibid*, p.60

of the rise in women's status".⁶⁶

The African independent church movement comprises black men and women who were disappointed with being regarded as objects by their white missionary leaders. They seceded from the churches led by whites, whom they had come to recognize as racists who had invaded their culture, destroyed their historical traditions, perverted their institutions, and made them landless vagrants in their own country.

Adrian Hastings suggests that the following factors have led to the appearance and growth of the African independent churches.

The Women's Association of African independent churches (WAAIC), a sister organization of the African independent churches Association (AICA), represents initial efforts to break out of traditional functions in order to confront difficult issues in a more revolutionary way.

At the start, membership in WAAIC was limited to women whose husbands were ministers belonging to AICA, though later it came

⁶⁶. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets of South Africa*, London, 1961, p. 139

to include all interested women. The first efforts of WAAIC were concentrated on *literacy classes*.

Cooking classes dealt with preventing illness, finding and preparing cheap but nutritious foods, and applying better cooking methods. *Sewing and Knitting classes* were very popular with the older women. The differences between the WAAIC programs and the more conventional approach of the Board of Christian Education are apparent.

Through WAAIC the women have found that dealing with the practical matters of leading a "better quality life" offers a most meaningful ministry. The difference in the quality in the lives of the women has been significant enough to lead momentum to non-Independent church growth.

The activities of AICA and WAAIC are an expression of a people who have not accepted the dictatorship of their oppressors as "God given". Though submerged in the "culture of silence" members of these movements have become aware that cultural invasion is an instrument of domination. They have not allowed the invasion to alienate them from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves.

3.9. The Emphasis on the Prayer Mountain

African churches emphasise the importance of prayer or mountain prayer. They very often have a prayer meeting at the church or certain places like a mountain. This practice is strongly reminiscent of Judaeo-Christian tradition as recorded in the Old and New Testaments. Most of the independent African churches have their own Holy Mountain. Jesus prayed at the Hill of Gethsemane before his arrest. One day Jesus took some of his disciples and led them apart upon a high mountain(Mark 9:2-11), and when Jesus prayed, he was transfigured. Jesus prayed continuously before he followed a course of action. It is reported that the apostle Paul spent time in prayer in the Arabian Wilderness before his mission journeys.⁶⁷ When John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea as "the voice of one crying out"(Isaiah 40:3) he prayed deeply beforehand. Moses met the Lord in His Glory on Mount Sinai during his prayer⁶⁸.

Ordinary Zionist preachers discover anew the Holy Mountain in their Bible. They believe that the holy words refer to them and their church.

⁶⁷. Galathians 1:17

⁶⁸. Exodus 3:1-14.

Remember...this mount Zion
wherein thou hast dwelt (Ps. 74:2)

3.10. Emergence of Prophets

Like prophetic churches elsewhere, the Independent churches are usually founded by a man or woman who adopts a role of religious leadership after a visionary experience, and who is a healer rather than a preacher.

One of the most distinctive prophetic churches was founded by George Khambule in 1919, and died thirty years later with him⁶⁹. He was fascinated by secret language, and by stones, especially the gemstones of Revelations. He looked for holy stones in the streams of Natal, which were known by their alphabet-type markings, and kept them in an "Ark in the Holy of Holies". The markings on the stones were the key to a secret language, which reflects the joy and wonder of literacy to a man of little education: 'you God have grace and goodness'.

He called himself Saint Nazar and listened to God on a "celestial telephone". He invented elaborate liturgies, which were sung antiphonally in Zulu. His congregation lived in isolation,

⁶⁹. Sundkler, 1976, p.119

surrounded by complicated prohibitions, and all his followers underwent the marriage of the Lamb.

For Timothy Cekwane (1873-1949), the sight of Halley's Comet, in 1910, was the formative experience of his life⁷⁰. The place where he saw it, on a mountain slope in the Drakensberg, became the place of the Light, and the Church he founded, the Church of Light. Its members wore red, the colour of blood, a core symbol. Timothy was a stigmatic; in ecstasy, blood would flow from his mouth and hands, a gift (if we can call it such) that was transmitted to several followers. There is a liturgical use of brooms, a symbol of cleansing from pollution. Like the followers of Saint Nazar, they withdrew from the wider world.

It has been suggested by MacGaffey that prophets were sometimes marginal in both the traditional and modern worlds, but, in South Africa, some Zionist leaders were linked to the Zulu royal family. Paul Mabilitsa, founder of the Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, who was the son of a Tswana chief, renounced his right of succession in order to play this role in the Zionist Church. As he said, "I am serving a greater Chief."

⁷⁰. Isicher, E., *ibid*, p.316

3.11. Hereditary Leadership

Prophetic leaders created a new kind of leadership role, and, often, like their counterparts elsewhere in Africa, they founded a dynasty. The second generation was usually better-educated, but less charismatic.

When Mabilitsa died in 1942, he was succeeded by his son, Philip, (d. 1965) a teacher with a B.Sc., while Isaiah Shembe was followed in 1935 by his son, Johannes Galilee Shembe, also a graduate teacher⁷¹.

3.12. Trend of Disruption

The Zionist churches have a constant tendency to divide⁷². The quest for healing can never be fully satisfied, and the afflicted tend to go from one religious leader to the next. Where roles of power and influence were unattainable in the wider society, it is not surprising that Zionists often had fierce disputes over the leadership of their church, and, as Weber pointed out long ago, the institutionalization of charisma is a perennial problem in

⁷¹. Isicher, E., *ibid*, p.314

⁷². Isichei, E., *ibid*, p.316

religious movements.⁷³

By 1913 there were an estimated thirty separatist churches. By 1955 this figure had grown to 1,200 groups. Today there are an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 such churches⁷⁴.

3.13. Characteristics of The Independent Churches

One of the most interesting characteristics of the independent churches is 'classical Pentecostal' church⁷⁵. And the other interesting aspects of the spread of Christianity among African peoples has been the spontaneous emergence of a genuinely African form of Christianity in the form of prophet-healing churches. The first of these churches appeared in South Africa and Nigeria some eighty years ago. Today almost every African tribe which has had a large number of people converted to Christianity, especially Protestant Christianity has developed some form of Independent church. In 1968 it was estimated that there were over five thousand Independent churches, as they are sometimes called, with some seven million adherents, and that they were increasing

⁷³. Ibid.

⁷⁴. Froise Marjoire, *ibid*, p.80

⁷⁵. Allan Anderson, *Bazelwane - African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Unisa, Pretoria, 1992, p.64

rapidly. Probably one out of every twelve African Christians is connected with a prophet-healing church.

The founders and healers of the prophet-healing churches are referred to as prophets. These prophets are characteristically Christians who claim to have received a vision from God which gives them the power to heal in his name. Sometimes these prophets try to stay within the mission church but, as their following grows and they develop a set of values and practices which differs from that of the parent church (for example polygamy), they tend to break away and found their own churches.

Africans have been blessed by God with two gifts, laughter and singing. Laughter comes naturally to a black person. It is not only when they are happy, but also in the midst of sorrow and trouble. At funerals, hymns and choruses of gladness are sung. Almost every black has a favourite hymn or chorus. This is sung repeatedly at the funeral of a person. Indeed, hymns are loved and sung by African independent churches.⁷⁶

The uniforms of Independent church members were copied from the mainline churches. The Methodists seem to have been leaders in

⁷⁶. Paul Makhubu, op cit., p.71

the wearing of uniforms by lay people. As for the clerical regalia, the Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans and Presbyterians influenced the African independent Churches. Uniforms were worn for identification purposes, and not as a deliberate expression of denominational separation or attainment of a higher spiritual lifestyle.⁷⁷

The African independent Churches have some weapons of the Spirits, such as, sticks, crooks, a staff, robes and drums. All these have a very deep religious or theological significance.⁷⁸

4. The Result of Growth

South Africa is a nation of black Christians. According to the 1980 census, 77 per cent of South Africans belonged to a church, and 88 per cent of these were black⁷⁹.

In South Africa the growth of the African independent churches

⁷⁷. Ibid, p.86

⁷⁸. Ibid, p.85

⁷⁹. J. de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*(Collins, London, 1986), p.242

has been phenomenal.⁸⁰

Year	The number of Churches
1913	30
1918	76
1932	320
1948	880
1955	1286
1960	2200
1967	3000
1992	over 3700

Year	Membership in S.A.	% of total Population
1946	761000	9.6%
1960	2313365	21.2%
1967	3100000	18.3%
1992	9460000	22.0%

⁸⁰. Elfriede Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa 1936-1960*, South African Council of Churches, Johannesburg, 1974, p.92 and Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World*, Wec Press, 1992, p. 378, David B.Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa - on analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movement*, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1968, pp.78-79. And M.L.Daneel, *op cit.*, p.45.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCH, ESPECIALLY THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH

1. A Comparison between Traditional Religion and Christianity

1.1. Perceptions and Dogma

1.1.1. The Perception of God

The traditional belief that God is superior and inferior at the same time provides the frame in which Africans understand the view of God. African theologians see that African people believe in a concept of one God.

They give one name to God which means: 'He Who is of Himself' or 'He Who came of Himself into being.'¹ Many societies like the Akan, Baluba, Ngoni, Tonga and others, speak of Him as 'the Great One', or 'Great God', or 'the Great King', or 'the surpassingly great Spirit'. The fact that He is invisible also leads many to visualize Him as spiritual rather than physical. It is commonly believed that God is Spirit, even if in thinking or talking about Him African peoples may often use anthropomorphic images.

The God of African traditional religion and the God of

1. Smith. E.W., African Ideals of God, 1961, p.109

Christianity are, in fact, the same concept of God². For some, (e.g. Idowu) the concept of God in African religion is essentially the same as that in Christianity, while Kibicho and Setiloane have gone further, and argued that the traditional African concept of God is in some respects higher than that of the idea of God in some Christian theology³. From a broader perspective the continuity between 'African traditional theology' and 'African Theology' has also recently been defended by Gwinyai Muzorewa.

Healing is a very important activity in African traditional religion for traditional priests and prophets. Independent churches also regard the concept of a healing God as one of the important practices of their church ministry. The Bible mentions the healing God in Malachi 4:2. Therefore the founders of new established independent churches are respected as great servants of God by their followers.

1.1.2. The Perception of Humanity

Oduyoye says that the human is a being in some relationship. The character of the human consists of two aspects, one is the relationship with God and the other is the relationship with

2. Muzorewa, G.H., *African Theology*, 1985 p.26

3. Parratt, J., *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, 1987, p.154

human neighbours⁴. From the traditional view of humanity which sees the human as part of the community we can arrive at a concept to distinguish whether or not someone belongs to the community of believers. This concept is useful in understanding the relationship between the vertical and horizontal lines of the Christian cross. The horizontal line links a man with his fellow man, the vertical line links a man with God.

The early Christian church in the first century had a community life and African independent churches in a modern society emphasise community consciousness, in a variety of ways, for example, through their specially designed uniform. And it is recognised that a human is a fragile being who is inclined to good or evil. This concept engendered a form of African belief in which the human depends absolutely on God.

1.1.3. Death

Some aspects of African belief help to explain some elements of the other world, beyond the life of the physical body, to Christians. The belief in ancestors of Africans explains the question of the nature of life after death⁵. This belief that deceased ancestors are still alive makes it easy to understand the belief in the eternal life in independent churches.

4. Muzorewa, G.H., *ibid*, p.38

5. *ibid*, p.41

1.1.4. Bantu Messiah

There is no concept of the Messiah in Zulu religion. However, the ancestors are the way to God for African people. This belief has to be reconciled with the Gospel in which Jesus is the only way (John 14:6), and many Bantu Messiahs who assert that they are the way rather than Jesus appeared in independent churches in South Africa like the Shembe of the Shembe Church.

1.1.5. Good and Evil

Among African people there is a story similar to the myth of Creation of the Bible. It is said that in the beginning everything was good⁶. Some African theologians say that the evil has control over several kinds of agents for human, spirit, and nature but that the agents themselves were not bad originally.

These ideas equate to the injunction of the Bible in which everything in the universe is created as good. In African life there is a ritual to overcome evil things when they happen. Sacrifice of cattle is one of the examples. We can find a similar sacrificial ritual in the Bible from Leviticus. This parallel has been useful in rendering Christianity comprehensible to followers of traditional religion.

1.1.6. Spirits

6. *ibid* p.34.

Africans believe that God is invisible but the activity of God is palpable⁷. From this concept we can explore the possibility of explaining the Holy Spirit of Christianity to the African people. And through the belief in the living spirits of the deceased, the beings of the spiritual world are understood well by the African people and also the spiritual understanding of Africans has become deeper.

The highest God delegates some of his authority to lower gods and the spirits of the ancestors, so the spirits of the ancestors act and work as representatives of God. From this understanding of the role of the spirits of the ancestors, African people understand easily the role of the Holy Spirit in Christianity. African people believe that the spirits of the ancestors watch over their tribes. This concept can help African people to understand the protection of the Holy Spirit of Christianity.

1.1.7. Sin

There is a process of cleansing (Chenura), before the candidate can join the spirits of the ancestors and take office formally as an ancestral spirit⁸. In this process the whole tribe of the people condones the dead person's sin. This concept can help to interpret the theory of sin and propitiation of Christianity.

7. *ibid*, p.28

8. *ibid*, p.31

1.1.8. Good Hope

According Mbiti, the concept of time in the future is rare to Africans⁹. However when Christianity as a three-dimensional religion which offers a future to the people is introduced to Africans, the Christian independent churches are seen as hopeful institutions for Africans, and oppressed people are encouraged to attend church, which brings about church growth.

Many concepts of the Zulu tribe have Biblical correlatives, so it could be supposed that some common concepts did not originate in the Zulu people's own religious thought but may have been learned from Christianity and later assimilated into Zulu thought.

1.2. Forms of Worship and Ancestor Veneration

1.2.1. The Object of Worship

Africans' religion, like other religions, is the urge to maintain harmony between the inner and the outer world of human feeling and desire. This urge led to the worship of ancestors who were believed to support human needs.

Human beings were worshipped after their death. Two motives activated an African to worship his ancestors, viz: (1) The

9. Mbiti, J., *op cit*, p.9

confidence he has in them, (2) He is afraid that they may do him injury unless he does something for them, hence sacrifice.

It is no wonder that most Africans stick to their old belief when we remember that they fear to listen to the inner voice of conscience and consequently shout it down with the hope of suffocating it. The reason for this hardness of the African is that he acquires this kind of religion in childhood, and that it has already existed for ages among his people. Some accept Christianity but do not forsake their religion altogether, whether or not it agrees with the Scriptures. There is fear in forsaking the ancestors' religion altogether because of the belief that this would mean the fall of the race.¹⁰

To the African most disease were caused by the angry ancestors who should be appeased in the way prescribed by a doctor by means of his divination¹¹. The worship of the deceased and healing are the main elements of traditional religion. Independent churches succeed to the traditions.

African Zionist rituals are designed for the benefit of the patient. Through these operations of control, the Zionist band is constituted and equipped for work. Its essential work is the

10. Maile, M.L., A Comparison and a Contrast between African Religions, Customs, Ceremonies and Scriptures, p.10.

11. Ibid. p.11.

healing of the sick, but this is always preceded by a Statement of Purpose.

1.2.2. Sacred Ritual

The fact that the doors and windows are tightly shut at certain points of the meeting and that members of the band are expected to leave their shoes outside the meeting room during the entire proceedings can be attributed to the same rationale. The transition to the real business of the day is marked by the closing of the door and window, by the sealing off of the border dividing the band from the alien exterior.

1.2.3. Order of Worship

There is a definite structure to the work of Zion. Four major divisions of "the work" can be outlined descriptively¹²:

(1) Opening sequence, (2) Prayer, (3) Preaching, (4) Healing.

The meeting opens with a declaration of innocence discreetly murmured by each member in turn to the effect that he or she is clean, free from any fault or contamination by the outside world which might exercise a harmful influence on the proceedings and on other participants.

12. Kiernan, J.P., *The Production and Management of Therapeutic Power in Zionist Churches within a Zulu City*, 1990, p.76

This is accomplished through the distribution of staffs. The staff is a long white stick which is carried upright in the right hand and which reaches from the ground to about the height of a man. Its essential work is the healing of the sick, but this is always preceded by two indispensable preparatory phases, prayer and preaching.

The Service of a Prayer is complex and concentrated but it can be broken down into two constituent stages; a period of extempore praying initiated by the presiding minister, during which everyone kneels, which is followed by a number of formulaic prayers recited standing. It is noticeable that the pattern of praying sets off individuals one from another and closes them up in a concentrated form of introversion. The ecstatic praying in their Spirit grows in intensity, but it rapidly reaches a crescendo and then gradually dies away. On occasion an individual who is charismatically endowed with prophecy will give out a series of nonsense syllables, such as "toh, toh, toh..." in a high shrill voice; sometimes words are used, but these are unrecognizable in their sequence. Each of these verbal sets is open to interpretation by other prophets.

It is possible to declare that one is in a state of impurity, sickness or crisis, without saying so in so many words. If a man is specially insistent and dominantly loud in his prayers and continues for a time after all others have finished, he is

indicating that he is caught up in some internal struggle and that he has a problem to solve, a danger to be delivered from.

1.2.4. Ecstasy

Ecstatic fervor is a very important rite in both traditional religion and Zionist worship. Ecstasy is the process for admittance into unification with gods and is the time for religious satisfaction. This is a case of ecstatic ritual.

I visited a Zionist house church named the Aerial church which is in KwaMashu, M section, on 12th of March, 1995. There were two pastors who wore Geneva style gowns with specially designed mitres. A few differences from conventional church practices are to be noted.

During the service, two pastors and five church members form a circle within the body of the congregation. A male member of the congregation begins to beat the drums, and the people in the circle move to its rhythm. Their pace of walking accelerates as the tempo of the drum beat increases. Their movement is anti-clockwise, and they dance while the congregation claps. After a while, as one female member of the circle becomes dizzy, she collapses backwards out of the circle and is supported by members of the congregation. While she rests, she is replaced in the circle by another member. Intermittently, the pastors retire from the circle to rest before leading again.

This form of worship is extremely physically strenuous. The bodies of worshippers become heated and they perspire profusely. I think that this part of the ritual was derived from the rites of traditional religion. The frenetic dancing appears to be a means of reaching ecstasy.

1.3. Comparison of the Role of the Priest of the Traditional Religion and Christianity in Religion and Society

1.3.1. Calling

Nobody can become a diviner by personal choice, at least not in theory. All diviners interviewed are emphatic that they had experienced a very definite call to the office of diviner by the shades. Hence they regarded themselves as the servants of the shades. In theory anybody can become a diviner, but in practice the overwhelming majority are women.

Dreams are very important instruments through which the shades call their servants. The dreams are often accompanied by visions which, to the dreamer, are both frightening and obscure. An Independent church leader can also become a priest after being called by the God in dreams and visions.

1.3.2. Role

There are diviner-prophet parallels in the African Independent

churches and traditional religion¹³. The role of traditional religious priests is the same as the role of Christian priests in such matters, for example, divining to resolve various problems of folk, praying to God and communicating the message of God. The healing and prophesying of traditional priests are the same powers as those exercised by the healers and prophets of the Christians. Healing and prophecy are the main role of the priests in the independent church. The Christian pastor's role is that of chief, teacher, educated elite and political leader in African society¹⁴. However there are marked differences between them. Traditional priests do not visit people's homes and normally people go to the priest but Christian priests visit the homes of members of their churches and consider ways to cope with situations.

On the other hand there are witches among traditional religious priests. They are sometimes angry with the people and curse them, but Christian priests never deliberately take wrong actions.

1.4. Comparison of the Religious Systems

There are two types of ministries in the MEC¹⁵, the first being

13. Osstuizen, *Emperical Studies of African Independent Church*, 1992, p.163

14. Sundkler, 1960, pp.88-133

15. Pretorius, H.L., *Sound the Trumpet of Zion*, Unisa, Pretoria, 1985, p.103

that where the emphasis is on the gifts granted by the Holy Spirit to prophets, healers or intercessors. The second type is, in the eyes of the MEC itself, no less charismatic: the ministry of leadership and organisation.

In contrast with the usage of many other African Independent Churches the word *apostles*(*abapostile*) does not refer to an office or to chosen individuals but to all believers, including women and children. In the MEC, it is simply regarded as synonymous with believers, Christians, etc.

The prophets(*abaprofeti*) are never appointed but are chosen by the spirit. They can foretell future events and reveal hidden objects. Only one person at a time at a certain locality is granted this gift of prophecy. However, someone else, an intercessor(*umthandazeli*), can simultaneously be gifted to lay hands on the sick and pray without prophecy. Although every branch of the church has its own prophet, it sometimes happens that nobody is chosen. Both sexes and all ages can become prophets. It also happens that people are prophets and intercessors at the same time.

The second type of leadership is structured hierarchically while the various roles of the different officers are well-defined. According to the 1980 constitution of the Shembe Church, the church officials are the following: "Archbishop, bishop,

ministers, deacons, evangelists, stewards, also preachers of both sexes".

The supreme authority in church matters, however, does not belong to the archbishop, but is invested in the elders(*abadala*), a committee of eight led by a minister. This permanent committee is also known as the "committee of eight men" (*ikomiti yamadoda asibhozo*) and is appointed by the annual conference or assembly.

A great number of beliefs and practices are not formulated into a systematic dogma which a follower is expected to accept. People simply assimilate religious ideas and practices.

The very existence of the first Zulu Zion was a bold challenge to the social and economic system of which the first Zulu Zion had been a part. But they were a creative group also, because, carried by an early charismatic wave, they were to form and fashion some of the linguistic and liturgical symbols characteristic of the whole. The movement cannot be understood without the apocalyptic dimension: these Zulu in white, brandishing their holy staffs, were waiting for the immediate return of Jesus.

In terms of organisation a characteristic Zionist church world usually consists of less than twenty ministers who are presided over by a bishop or president, who may or may not be the founder. A minister may have several congregations, although usually he

will have only one. The membership of the congregation varies from six to forty, although this number does not include children. Few churches succeed in developing beyond this scale. There is often a struggle for an independent leadership in much the same way as there is in the Ethiopian church. Often the only way an ambitious subordinate can achieve his aims is by breaking away from his own bishop to establish his own church. In terms of structure, this means that whenever a church expands beyond the effective control of its leader, it will be split into similarly manageable units¹⁶.

At the level of congregation, Zionist groups are strongly cohesive and exclusive. They limit their interaction with outsiders, although they may well cultivate those who are susceptible to conversion. They spend most of their free time and energy in communication with subordinate evangelists and preachers (Who, needless to say, are all men) but the intimate size of the group means that to some extent each person monitors the behaviour of others. The unity and the cohesion of the congregation is, therefore, based on shared responsibility and mutual support¹⁷.

One of the ways in which responsibility is shared is through the

¹⁶. Martin Prozesky and John de Gruchy, *Living Faith in South Africa*, Saint Martins Press, New York, 1995, p.124

¹⁷. *Ibid*, pp.124-125

proliferation of minor offices, mainly among men but to some extent also among women, and support is manifested in economic as well as social form. In this respect, the Zionist congregation caters for the individual in much the same way as the kinship groups once did. Obviously though it is not a kinship unit which relied on marriage and descent for its continuity. To a large degree the Zionist church does not succeed in retaining the allegiance of its children, and recruits its converts from among adults who have suffered misfortune in the population. This is where the links established by and through women become crucial conduits to conversion. Probably this is the reason why women are ordained along with their husbands and are accorded the corresponding status but without the right to exercise any part of the office, except informal and untrained ministry. The eligibility for this rests on the demonstrated ability to attract adherents. Thus the part played by women in attracting followers is acknowledged by joint ordination¹⁸.

What is distinctive about this order of Zionist power is that it cannot operate apart from a communal base and that, while it can be used to strengthen the Zionist community in its weaker parts, the main object is to extend the community by bringing in fresh recruits¹⁹. Furthermore, since blessings and the supply of ashes are prerogatives of the minister, he has a commanding position

18. Ibid, p.125

19. Kiernan, *ibid*, p.110

in the distribution of Zionist curatives to potential converts.

1.5. The Elements of Worship

1.5.1. Dance and Songs

Song is vital aspect of Zulu culture, and often occurs in conjunction with dance. Both traditional worship and worship in the independent churches incorporate song and dance in many rituals. This contrasts with the practice in predominantly White mainline churches where dancing as an accompaniment to hymns is rare. Most Zulu songs form the accompaniment to some dance, and people begin to dance at an early age. Dance is also common in predominantly Black congregations of mainline churches, for example, in St. John's Presbyterian Church in Groutville near Stanger, and KwaDabeka Presbyterian church, where I minister. Dancing has great ritual value in the lives of primitive peoples, some of the important occasions when song and dance were traditionally crucial to the performance of rituals include wedding ceremonies, battle preparation and funerals, and there are many occasions in Zulu life when dancing forms part of the ceremonial of some important event.

The dancing at a wedding differs in detail on different occasions, but there is a certain fixed procedure in all. The bridal party dances first, beginning with the *indondlo*, the

opening dance at all weddings, consisting of backward and forward movements of a quick and spirited nature, unaccompanied by any clapping of hands²⁰. In the case of the marriage dance, there is a special procedure which is still commonly practised in contemporary Christian marriages which replicates the traditional marriage ceremony. The *indondlo*, or opening dance, which involves alternating advance and retreat movements by first the bridal party and then the groom's entourage, is still a feature of a modern Zulu church wedding of which I have experienced. In a ceremony which I conducted at Glendale, Natal, on 30 October, 1995, the opening dance took 40 minutes.

According to Kriger²¹, "another occasion on which dancing had ritual value was before a hunt. The most spectacular and imposing of all Zulu dancing was, however, that of the regiments of warriors in full regimental dress; and the annual dances at the royal kraal, just after the Feast of the First-fruits, must have presented a most brilliant and colourful sight"²².

The dancing in Zionist ritual is very important. I had an opportunity to see the whole ritual of izangoma on 20th January, 1996, at Luganda township in Marianhill at Pinetown. There were

²⁰. Krige, E.J., *The Social System of the Zulus*, Shuter & Shooter, Pietermaritzberg, 1936, p.341

²¹. Ibid, p.342.

²². Ibid

two izangoma: Mrs. Veronica Ndlovu and Miss Maria Mbokazi. One was beating the drums and the other was dancing. While both sang. Their dance and songs progressed continuously. The songs or hymns are sung in most of the Independent churches and African congregations of mainline churches. Dancing must be performed continuously and some songs are sung during unstructured time orders by the congregation.

The average Zionist church music contains traditional and western elements. The text, the rhythm and the harmony are mostly western or western influenced, but the song is usually performed in the traditional form of call and answer. Rhythm is often stressed through the use of drums, according to traditional African, but not Zulu custom. So we find a new type of church music which synthesises European, Zulu and other African elements²³.

1.5.2. The Prayer

The prayer is the expression of an individual's feelings of fear or joy in words or actions. Like all human beings, an African, when in difficulties above his intellectual and physical powers, appeals to someone who is more powerful. Independent churches understand that traditional prayers are similar to prayers of Bible.

23. Oosthuizen, G.C. and Hexham, I., eds., *Afro-Christian Religion at the Grassroots in Southern Africa*, 1991, p.174

In times of drought the Zulus prayed to one *Umlenzemunye* (the one - legged) in a different way from that of the Basotho people²⁴. The chief would send word to all his people to fast for a certain number of days. This means that men should not cohabit with their wives. At the expiration of that time all men should gather at the chief's place and from there proceed to an appointed mountain driving a firstborn ox for the sacrifice. No one was allowed to point his forefinger heavenwards. If there was a need to point heavenwards, he ought to point with his two fists combined. The wood for a sacrificial offer would be collected and a bonfire would be made. The beast's blood was burnt as sacrifice to the ancestors while the meat was roasted and eaten by all the men. The bones were burnt. After this, the ceremony would close. It was a common occurrence that when the men came from the mountain rain accompanied them to their homes. Is this not similar to what happened at Carmel when the prophet Elijah burnt a bull as a sacrifice to the Lord and rain followed immediately thereafter? (II Kings 18)

The Zulus have a different kind of prayer for their sick persons. The Africans' prayer for the sick does not coincide with that of the Scriptures, not only with regard to words used, but also with regard to the one to whom prayer is directed. We read in the Scriptures that "In those days Hezekiah was sick to death, and he prayed unto the Lord who healed him" (II Chronicles 32:24).

24. Maile, M.L., *ibid*, p.45

No sacrifice was offered. We read again in 2 Kings 20:1 that when Hezekiah was informed of his near death by the prophet Isaiah "he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord".

A thanksgiving prayer is accomplished in three different ways. Firstly, believers leave some corn unharvested at the corners of the field and around the threshing-floor. This is left for the ancestors so that they will always be willing to give the people corn. Secondly, they make much beer and place it in a certain hut. The following morning people flock to drink what is left by the dead. Of course we understand that the dead cannot drink the beer, but it is assumed that they drink it. Thirdly, every time a beer-pot is placed before them they take a calabashful of beer and pour it on the ground, saying that they give it to the dead before they can start drinking.

In Deuteronomy 26:2 and 10 we read about this kind of thanksgiving prayer which the Israelites were commanded to accomplish: "Thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto a place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name....and now behold I have brought the first fruits of the land which Thou, O Lord, hast given me...."

We have an instance of a barren woman in the Scriptures and the

kind of prayer she offered to God. This woman is Hannah. It is told that "she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. She vowed, and said: O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but will give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head". (1 Sam. 1:10-11).

It is very interesting to compare and contrast Hannah's prayer with the Africans' in this particular matter. It was a common practice among the Africans that a barren woman would carry a doll made of a gourd and let it sleep by her side.

1.5.3. Communion

Most writers on African independent Churches have had little to say on the subject of Communion²⁵, and what little appears in the literature is almost entirely negative. Oosthuizen(1968) is one of the major writers who have drawn attention to this problem. He published a comprehensive survey of the existing literature on the Separatist churches. He remarks that: "Most of the nativistic movements do not observe the essential sacrament of Holy Communion"²⁶. His explanation appears to consist of two

25. Kiernan, *ibid*, p.121

26. Oosthuizen, 1968, p.xiii

separate strands: In the first he remarks "Holy Communion has no equivalent in African religion" by which it seems that he means that the idea of a purely symbolic, mystical sacrifice is not present in African culture. The second comment is that "because, in many Protestant Churches and especially in the Pentecostal movements, the role of Communion has been a minor one" therefore "there is little understanding of what sin really means"²⁷.

The most frequent occasions for a Communion service are in connection with funeral and *ukubuyisa* observances. The really moving feast is the *ukubuyisa* ceremony. According to Zulu custom this should ideally take place one year after the burial but, in practice, this is flexible and it has been known to take place up to five years after death.

The Communion is a symbolic meal which is rather exclusive; the meal of dispersal is an actual meal in which all participate. This real meal consists of a heaped plateful of rice, potatoes and bread with a piece of goat's meat for men and important women (one of two goats are slaughtered during the meeting for this purpose). Agape is apt to use in describing this meal of dispersal.

In conclusion, the outstanding features of Zionist Communion, as I have observed it, are its irregularity and its exclusiveness,

27. *ibid*, p.195

while the character of its setting is that of an inter-church gathering. My contention is that the irregularity and exclusiveness of Communion are an expression of the inconstancy and frailty of the bonds of inter-church cooperation.

1.5.4. Dreams and Visions

Dreams and visions are the key to interpretation in traditional religion and are also of importance to Zulu Zionists.

My contention that dreams and visions constitute two distinct modes of communication rests, firstly, on a difference of context, i.e. sleeping as opposed to waking states. But visions cannot occur just any time while awake; they are confined to special circumstances, namely the context of a group meeting or some similar event such as a baptism. Visions can emerge only on the tide of fervour released by intense communal prayers, although nearly all activities of a meeting, healing included, rely heavily on prayers and invocation. Secondly, not everybody can experience a vision, whereas dreaming is open to all.

The vision is the property of the prophets or charismatic leaders but it may be exhibited by those who aspire to become prophets; indeed, it is only by a convincing demonstration of this and other gifts that one can win acceptance as a Zionist prophet. The visionaries, therefore, form an elite group, while the dream is

within reach of all. Thirdly, the distinction may be expressed as a difference of source, although this is a claim that cannot be upheld absolutely. Stated in crude terms, the Holy Spirit is the author of visions, the ancestors are the source of influential dreams.

Hence visions are normally deployed as part of the healing art and confined to the relationship between healer and patient²⁸. Dreams can be used to express muted envy and rivalry towards officeholders and to lay claim to efficacious mystical powers, and thus to office itself. These cases demonstrate the importance of visions.

Michael Ngomezulu was singled out for his special spiritual gifts in Zulu Zion. It seems certain that he was the very first to have a vision of the white robes to be worn by those in Zion²⁹. When Daniel Nkonyane declared that for holy worship believers would have to follow the example of Moses of old: no shoes in the temple, he claimed to have been instructed by the Angel.

1.5.5. Special Items

In African worship and services there are many special items like the short speech which is given by a person who is not involved in the leading of the service. For example, in my own Sunday

28. Kiernan, *ibid*, p.203

29. Sundkler, B., *ibid*, p.48

service in African townships, during the course of the service some members of the congregation may stand up among the congregation and ask to speak for a short while to the minister. Another example is when I conducted the funeral service of one of my church elders at KwaMashu in October 1995. The service went on for five hours because after the eulogy many representatives from the relatives of the deceased came out and one by one addressed the people and led songs with dances. Each representative took a considerable period of time which is why the service contained for so long. These practices, which are found in most African churches but are not found in European mainline churches, come from traditional religious customs. Among their traditional religious ritual some adults of the community are given a time to speak about matters related to the purpose of the ritual.

Others may preach besides the minister, but only men qualify to exercise this right and then only on condition that they hold one of the subordinate offices in the rank hierarchy, namely evangelist or preacher³⁰. It is up to the minister to call upon additional speakers if he needs them.

1.5.6. Healing

In its healing activities, the culmination and climax of all regular meetings, the congregation draws on its prophetic flair

30. Kiernan, *ibid*, p.86

rather than on its ministerial faculty. In healing, it is believed that the power of the Holy Spirit is being brought to bear on human frailty. This extraordinary power is not freely available to anybody. It has to be carefully tapped and nurtured. The context for doing this is the constitution of a human gathering as a Christian congregation. Once this has been accomplished, the power of the Spirit is engaged by communal prayers, which is in part an expression of a collective concern for the sick, and is further generated by the delivery of the scriptural Word reinforced in preaching. The healing thus always presupposes prayers and Christian revelation.

More than this, the precondition as well as social correlative of amassing the spiritual power is a surge of congregational effervescence and enthusiasm. The more fervent the expression of collective solicitude, the more it evinces a belief that the Spirit is present, and the more confidently the work of healing can be undertaken. In this way, the congregation can be regarded as a lens which relays, focuses and concentrates the effulgence of the Spirit on afflicted individuals. But the prophet is especially effective in sharpening and giving greater accuracy to that focus.

The Zionists in KwaMashu renew and reinforce their corporate exclusiveness in opposition to the wider category of town-dwelling Africans through healing work, which includes divination

or prophecy³¹.

1.6. Garments

1.6.1. Dress

The Zionist churches in South Africa are much like their counterparts elsewhere, such as the Aladura churches of Nigeria³². Like them, they wear distinctive robes and insignia, and practise various avoidances that are often based on the Hebrew Bible. The robes are often white, blue, or green the colours of purity, water, and vegetation³³. Both costumes and taboos mark the perimeters of group identity in the wilderness of urban life, and define an alternative order and system of values. They offer a model of holistic healing, which the western world is now beginning to rediscover, and community in the dislocations caused by urbanisation and labour migration.

Sephiri have the elaborate offices and the distinctive robes of Zionist churches.

The basic uniform which is prescribed for members of any single congregation consists of a long white outer garment for men, worn

31. Kiernan, *ibid*, p.100

32. Isicher, *ibid*, p.313

33. *ibid*

over street clothes, and for women a tunic and skirt combination of set colours and design which replace ordinary clothing. A great deal can be added to and superimposed upon the basic uniform in the style of an emblematic adornment. The use of cords, sashes and ribbons around the wrist, around the neck or draped across the shoulders introduces variety and additional variation is achieved through the choice of two colours, blue and green, for all this regalia:

Male diviners often include the cloth in their bags which contain their knives, bones, medicines, etc. Diviners say that it may not be tied around the head, many diviners associating their bare heads with the brooding of the shades. Informants are emphatic that the cloth must be either black or of another dark colour. Dark blue or navy are accepted as being black. "We use this cloth so that we can see clearly, in white." The diviner at eThelezini said: "The black is the colour of the night where they (the shades) are." Other diviners confirmed this view, adding that "the black is like the dark of the hut in which we are (we were sitting in a hut with very little light coming through the closed door). No diviner works in the sun. He must have dark colour or black cloth. So they symbolically, to carry the night (e.g. the darkness) with them, where they go." Often there are white beads fixed to the edges of the black cloth, sometimes in considerable numbers.

The diviner at eThelezini said: "The beads are their signs if they are white. So when the cloth has the white beads it is clear what the cloth is for. It is for divination. Nothing else." Several informants said that the cloth was not to be washed³⁴.

1.6.2. Flag

When the flags are raised aloft, they form a protective umbrella holding off danger.

In the context of Zionism, a green cord worn around the neck or a blue flag attached to the staff indicate the different levels of experience and proficiency in sustaining and successfully repelling mystical attack³⁵.

1.6.3. Stick

The ceremony is accomplished through the distribution of staves. The staff is a long white stick which is carried upright in the right hand and it reaches from the ground to about the height of a man.

While a hymn is being sung, "Arm yourselves with the weapons, said the Lord of Hosts," the minister gathers up in his arms the bundle of staves from the corner of the room and, while he stands

34. Berglund, Axel-Ivar, *Zulu Thought-patterns and Symbolism*, 1976, p.176-177

35. Kiernan, *ibid*, p.120

in the centre and prays over the bundle, the members of the band shuffle around him in a circle. Upon the reception of the staff, the direction of the movement is reversed. In this way a whole series of separate acts of acknowledgement of the leader-follower relationship is completed.

Zionists refer to their staff as literally a "weapon" (*isiKhali*). Without the *isiKhali* the Zionist is unequipped for ritual work. The staff is a symbol and its transfer symbolises a much deeper form of dependence.

The staff is normally fashioned out of wood, enquiries as to the origin of which meet with the reply that it is of *umhlanga*, meaning "reed". The other source which is sometimes mentioned is *umthate*, by which is meant, simply, a tree.

The reed possesses two outstanding features which contribute to the powerful symbolism of the Zionist staff; not only does it grow in or near water, but it stools³⁶. Because it grows in water, the reed partakes of the cooling capacity of water.

The reed (*umhlanga*) is a key symbol for the Zulus and is accorded a position of major significance in the creation myth which accounts for Zulu origins. The Zulu tradition of creation records that "we men come out of a bed of reeds" and, as to the manner

36. It multiplies by throwing out young shoots or stems. (see Kiernan, op cit., p.114).

of the coming out, "the first being(unkulunkulu) broke off the nations from the reed" ³⁷. This breaking off or stooling is characteristic of the reed.

The significance of the stooling pattern for an understanding of Zionism is that the distribution of staves at the beginning of the meeting is nothing less than a ritual enactment of stooling. The bundle of staves("reeds") is stacked in a corner of the minister's house from the end of one service to the beginning of the next when they are ritually "broken off" one by one and claimed by individuals. This ritual is an acknowledgement that each member of the band has come out from the minister, as a child breaks off from its father, and that he is the source of their special status as Zionists. The ritual of the staves expresses very clearly the relationship between leaders and followers. He is in a sense their source: he gave them new life and power in Zion and they depend on him. His control over the bundle of staves epitomizes his control over his followers and, each time they accept their staff from him and return it to him, they acknowledge this control and submit to it.

The Zionist staff is, therefore, very rich in a symbolic content in its multiple reference to weapon, reed, and herding-stick. A variety of levels of mystical power is seen to flow from it; warding off attack, driving out spirits, cooling down dangerous

37. Callaway, op cit., p.9

impulses, inculcating order and control within the community.

Most Zionists carry sticks in their hands. This custom comes from the case of Moses who carried a stick, when God sent him to Egypt (in Exodus 4:2-3)

In conclusion, the spiritualistic dimension must be emphasised in Christian worship if Christian services are to be meaningful worship for African people.

2. Vestiges of Traditional Religion in South African Independent Churches

2.1. Africans who are Living in a United Religion and a Society

2.1.1. Style of Worship

In Zulu traditional religion an adult can sometimes conduct a ritual, as is the practice in many African Christian congregations. For example in most of the outstations services are conducted by elders without an ordained minister and a congregation is happy and participates well. This is a contrast to Korean churches. Korean congregations think that if they have no minister there is no church and the church cannot grow, so they try to invite a minister which means that they have to raise money to support him. This in turn means that the church grows.

In South African churches elders lead the congregation. The congregation do not regard it as important to pay the church elders. Their consciousness of financial independence is not strongly developed. However, some charismatic leaders of the independent churches, without support from outside, emphasise collection money to the members and so they achieve a financial independence.

Their services focus on hymn singing and liturgies; like the Aladura³⁸, they are profoundly indigenised and self-supporting churches.

2.1.2. The Religion in People's Lives

Human life is a religious experience of the universe. African peoples find or attribute religious meanings to the whole of existence. Many beliefs and practices are not, however, formulated into an orthodox which a follower is expected to accept. People simply assimilate whatever religious ideas and practices are most significant for them.

The traditional African religion was life-affirming³⁹. The benefits it sought were longevity, health, prosperity, offspring, and protection from evil but it offered little solace in times

38. Isicher, *ibid* p.313

39. *ibid*, p.123

of famine or disease, and even the longest life must end.

2.2. The Special Characteristics of African Independent Churches which are Related to Traditional Religion

2.2.1. Healing

Revelation and healing play important roles in the independent Churches.

During healing rituals, the band now rearranges itself to form a healing and a caring community. From being a congregation with a rigid structure based on authority and rank, it reconstitutes itself in terms of prophetic and healing powers. Here structure is supplanted by charisma while functions give way to powers. The object of healing powers is the individual in distress, who unequivocally declares himself by voluntarily stepping into a specially created healing space. The congregation stands, the benches and chairs are removed together with the seating mats which were strewn on the floor; the children may be sent outside, the door is closed and the window is fastened. Members of the congregation press back against the walls of the room leaving a clear space in the centre. While a hymn is begun with the theme of sickness and health, (e.g. "We have heard the groaning of the sick. May they recover") men and women who are officially designated as healers, trot around forming an inner circle and

they are usually led by a prophet if one is present. The term employed for a healer is a *thandazo*, literally "one who prays", but this does not specify his or her true function, which is treating the sick. The *thandazo* is empowered to lay hands on the sick, to pray for them and bless them.

These powers reside in most of the initiated and healthy members of the congregation. Only the uninitiated (outsiders) and the unhealthy or inactive are excluded from participating in the healing circle.

Individual healers step from the circle, place their hands on the patient's head or shoulders, or on the region affected, and pray vigorously and ecstatically over him or her (patients are predominantly female). Whether hands or staff are employed, two distinct types of action are involved: forceful pressure and brushing off. The first symbolizes the communication of strength and resolve. The second is symbolic of the removal of unclean and undesirable elements.

It seems that for the Zulu, water, as the origin of living things, has traditionally possessed some sacred powers and curative properties. When taken as a medicine, water is rarely used on its own, but usually in combination with ashes. Ashes are thoroughly mixed into the water which is then drunk by those seeking alleviation from illness and particularly from stomach

pain. This mixture is generally referred to as *isiwasho* which is a corrupt form of the word "washing". The same term is also applied to a bottle of seawater or of water to which salt has been added, provided it is meant to serve the same need. The *isiwasho* is doubly an expellant, operating not only on the physical content of the stomach but also driving out the evil spirits which are causing the affliction.

2.1.2. Group Conversion

Man's contact with God through acts of worship may be direct or via the intermediaries. It is not the means but the end that matters most. Sometimes that end is sought or attained, not by the individual alone, but corporately with or on behalf of the wider community of which he is a member or whose religious functions are entrusted to him. In reality, religion is not, and cannot be, a private affair; it must involve two or more parties. So South African people convert as a group. For example, a Zionist man observes no further limits. There is no reason why he must marry a Zionist woman. Should he take a wife from outside Zionism, she normally becomes a Zionist, for it is the expected pattern of Zulu society that at marriage a woman follows the religion of her husband.

2.1.3. Return to Tradition

One of the sources of severe strain for Africans exposed to modern change is the increasing process by which individuals become detached from their traditional environments. They are torn between the life of their forefathers which, whatever else might be said about it, has historical roots and firm traditions, and the life of our technological age which, as yet, for many Africans has no concrete form or depth. In these circumstances, Christianity and Islam do not seem to remove the sense of frustration and uprootedness.

It is not enough to embrace a faith which is confined to a church building or mosque, which is locked up six days and opened only once or twice a week. Unless Christianity and Islam fully occupy the whole person as much as, if not more than, traditional religions do, most converts to these faiths will continue to revert to their old beliefs and practices for perhaps six days a week, and certainly in times of emergency and crisis.

The deeply traditional belief that words have an intrinsic power of their own is seen in the elaborate names of many of these churches: The Holy Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion of South Africa, The Star Nazareth Church in Zion of Sabbath, Holy Spirit Jerusalem Church in Zion.

Most of the inhabitants of the township, particularly women, will, at some time or another, have had recourse to the services of an *isangoma* or an *inyanga* as a result of which they will have procured *umuthi* for curative, protective or aggressive purposes. Kaolina Mayundla whose husband had died the previous year wore the right kind of mourning dress, shown her by the Spirit: navy blue with yellow bands, the yellow colour being particularly effective against malaria.

During the wedding ceremony, on the wedding day before the actual marriage service, the bride goes to the house of the bridegroom and the relatives of the bridegroom take a goat and slaughter it. This activity serves to communicate with their ancestors and during this sacrificial ceremony the bride cannot go out of the house of the bridegroom. Then some time after the sacrifice, they move to the place in which the marriage service will be held. Usually the goat is killed in the afternoon, which in the modern marriage service in the Christian church presents a difficulty, so they try to compromise between customs by killing the goat in the early morning, and after spending more than one hour in the house of the bridegroom after the sacrifice, the bride and groom leave the house for the church wedding service.

2.3. Traditional Elements in African Independent Churches

2.3.1. Magical Characteristics

Divination occurs only if there is a reputable prophet present in an independent church, for divination is proper to his function. As the preacher searches for the right words, the prophet searches for the cause of illness⁴⁰.

The first step in divination is to recognise the symptoms and the prophet must describe these to the patient's satisfaction. The next step is the search for the cause, and here, there is an exploration of solutions⁴¹. Each solution is an experimentation, a partial and tentative attempt to pin down the cause. Through successive attempts at solution which elicit approval or disapproval from the patient, a path is gradually indicated to the cause which is in accordance with the patient's needs and the needs of the community. A compromise is reached between contending points of view; between the patient and the community, and between a number of prophets vying with one another to produce the acceptable solution.

The old African believed that most illnesses among his people were caused by witchcraft.

A corollary of this is that the healing takes the form of an anti-witchcraft, anti-sorcery movement, for the dangerous

40. Kiernan, *ibid*, p.96.

41. Kiernan, J.P., *ibid*, p.98.

elements of a township living are epitomized and crystallized in a widespread traffic in medicines and charms and their use for harmful purposes.

In the most typical Zionist Churches, healing plays a predominant role⁴². This healing mostly takes place 'pastorally' when a patient consults a prophet through immersion in a river or during a church service. Healing, Independent Churches believe, is a major purpose of Christ's mission on earth.

There is nothing apparently mysterious about water. The mystery and the power enter only when certain words are pronounced over it. Of paramount importance therefore is the place of the spell or the blessing. Thus to be effective in Zionist usage, water must be prescribed by a prophet and empowered by a ministerial blessing and this is as true of baptismal water as it is for the water bottled and blessed at the weekly service to be drunk by the sick in the privacy of their homes. The usage of water therefore testifies to the power of the word which is spoken over it and which transforms it from ordinary water into powerful water.

2.3.2. Use of Rhythmical Instruments

The Apostolics regard themselves as different from the Zionists -

42. Becken, H.J., 'The African Independent Churches' understanding of the ministry in: D. J. Bosch(ed.): *Ampsbediening in Afrika*. Pretoria, NG Kerboekhandel, 1972, pp.156-161.

"we clap hands, the Zionists beat drums" - and they emphasise more than the Zionists the therapeutic efficacy of water; thence the use of hundreds of buckets and bottles of blessed water from the Fountain of the prophet or prophetess. Most of the Independent churches use musical instruments in church service. My KwaDabeka Thembalihle church and St. John's Presbyterian church use some instruments.

2.3.3. Prophetic Religion

Are the prophetic churches profoundly Biblical, deeply indigenised form of Christianity, or are they syncretistic and post-Christian? The key issue is whether or not the African prophet is regarded as a Saviour, comparable with Christ. They believe they know the secret teaching of the Bible, they recognise each other by a coded language, and they call each prayer group a proof of salvation⁴³.

In the calling of people to the office of prophet the ancestor(s) could act as mediator for the Umoya(spirit). A few have been called by the Holy Spirit alone, one such was a male prophet who felt "something heavy," was laid upon his shoulders during singing and praying in a Church service, in a way that is reminiscent of the Ukuthwasa experience. After this he started to speak in tongues and added: "While this happened the Holy Spirit said to me that I was going to be a prophet. Immediately

43. Isicher, *ibid*, p.317

after that I could see things about people as if I was viewing a TV screen and it was as if someone was talking in my ear." Here the Holy Spirit made direct contact without the intervention of ancestors. The Church in which this prophet serves is known as the Sardis Church of the Holy Spirit of Zion.

Prophecy is one of the main church services.⁴⁴

2.3.4. The importance of symbols

There are two occasions on which Zionists have recourse to water. When ill, they will use it as a medicament, either by drinking it or washing in it. But their most vivid recollection will be of the moment when the river water closed over them in the rite of Baptism, which is by triune immersion. I have gathered that the water is imbued with the spirit. Perhaps this belief is well served by the choice of turbulent pools in rivers or seashore breakers as the more usual places for Baptism. Established members of the group will immerse themselves in the baptismal water in the hope of transferring some of this power to their persons. It seems that for the Zulu, water, as the origin of living things has traditionally possessed some sacred powers and curative properties.

The introduction of ashes is an additional source of power. Like

44. Osthuizen, G.C., and Irving Hexham, *Empirical Studies of African Independent/Indigenous Churches*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, N.Y., 1992, p.171.

water, ashes constitute a cooling agent which can neutralise hot and dangerous states, being themselves the result of the cooling of fire⁴⁵. These ashes are taken from the fireplace of the minister of the congregation, i.e. the house where the weekly meeting is held. The ashes (*umlotha*-from the verb meaning "to die out"), must be wood ash and must be the result of a fresh burning.

2.3.5. Etiquette

In Zulu tradition a young person cannot make eye contact when speaking. When an older person talks to a younger person the younger person may not stand and must sit. In a situation in which many people are sitting in a gathering, all of the men sit on the right side and all of the women sit on the left side.

In my African church children concede their chairs to older people.

2.4. The Proofs of Practice

2.4.1. The Holy Place

The Venda of the Northern Transvaal have a Holy place, which is called spiritual place, at Funduzi lake. The Independent church has some Holy places like Holy mountain, or Holy City.

45. Kiernan, *op cit*, p.109

In 1911, Shembe established his own Church of the Nazarites⁴⁶. He founded his organisation near Ohlange, north of Durban; he called his centre Ekuphakameni, the Elated Place. It was at this time that he had his second mountain experience. He heard a voice telling him, "Go to the mountain Inhlangakazi, and pray there. I will give unto you a new power". He therefore went to Inhlangakazi in 1912. Later on he was to draw the obvious parallel with Moses: just as Moses had gone to the Mountain in order to praise God, so he too was compelled to go to the Mountain, with his congregation, to bring praises to God.

2.4.2. The Place of Worship

Evidence shows that African peoples worship God at any time and in any place, and therefore meet for services anywhere. Especially in big city areas many small groups of independent churches are found in certain parks, or on any vacant ground and sometimes even on the road. Baptism is celebrated wherever natural water is available, Zionist churches also conduct baptism in the sea: every Sunday morning the baptismal ritual of the Zionist church takes place at the Durban beaches.

2.4.3. No Concept of Judgement

Wonderful enough is the fact that all African people believed in future life for all. They did not concern themselves with hell, and there was no thought of it at all.

46. Sundkler, *op cit.*, p.167

2.4.4. The Hereditary of Leadership

The fusion between the old church leader and the new is very important forms in church life among believers⁴⁷. Succession struggles between the prophet's son and his older and more charismatic associates are common.

Ma Mbele's husband, also a bishop, rules the church she founded⁴⁸, while Ma Mbele takes refuge in seclusion and silence. Grace Tshabalala was concerned at the great proliferation of different Zionist churches, and devoted herself to uniting them.⁴⁹ She founded a movement for Zionist women, which drew its members from thirty-two churches.

3. The Role and Influence of Traditional Religion in Independent Church Growth

3.1. The Formation of Belief Systems

African independent churches grow very well when traditional religious customs and life customs are added into church practice. For example, emphasising an increase in monetary offering, prayers for healing and encouragement of song and dance

⁴⁷. M.C.Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol.1, Mouten and Co., Paris, 1971, p.460

⁴⁸. Isicher, *ibid.* p.314

⁴⁹. *Ibid.*

are not separated in performance in African tradition. At all times song is accompanied by dance. The Independent church does not prohibit dancing and the singing of songs and hymns. The dancing practice in the independent church life harmonises naturally with the Africans' original life style so there is no problem in accepting Christianity.

Because the independent church allows some traditional elements, people can adopt a Christian belief while holding on to the traditional styles of belief.

But there is a problem. When the traditional priest like the isangoma invites god (or the spirit) into himself or herself he or she becomes the person of the god, and when the god is sent back, the isangoma returns to being an ordinary person, as if the spirit has never entered his life. African Christians are saints in the church during the Christian service. However, when they leave the church after the service they, may revert to being normal persons much the same as unbelievers.

3.2. External Growth

The independent church grew rapidly numerical because the church preserved and fostered some customs of traditional religion and harmonised with the emotion of the people. Followers took great pleasure in following a black minister who speaks African

languages and also understands their tradition. Presently most of the African Christian groups belong to independent churches.

3.3. The Development of Black Christian Theology

The proposed African Theology is to be distinguished from Black Theology which is found in the United States and Southern Africa. Although Black Theology claims some affinity with Africa, all African theologians do not share to the same degree the emphases of Black Theology.

African Theology does seek to vindicate the dignity of the oppressed black man. It places great emphasis on the Old Testament. But African Theology does not claim a black Messiah, nor does it lay claim to a monopoly due to the race or skin colour. The universal salvation of Africans lies elsewhere according to African Theology. Extreme religious consciousness is what gives the African his significant place in God's creation.

Black Theology primarily originated in the United States, but is today very strong in Southern Africa.

The emphasis on African personality, authentic existence, and humane concern almost to the neglect of the spiritual needs of

a man is one similarity between Black Theology and African Theology. The two systems also give little or no significance to the Biblical doctrine of individual salvation. Emmanuel Milingo understood his spiritual healing ministry as a total liberation of the humanity⁵⁰. A universalistic view of redemption is at least implied in both systems. But it must be stressed that Black Theology is not identical with African Theology.

The independent church also contributed to the development of Black or African theology in two areas: one was the desire to be independent of White rule and the other was the urge to strongly preserve their own traditions⁵¹.

Balia discusses the development of Christian resistance to racism, linking the reaction of different church groupings to crucial events in the political and racial conflict in South Africa, especially between 1960 and 1985⁵².

There was a profound radicalisation of black thought from the mid 1970s on, reflecting both an increase in government oppression, and the influence of Black theology, Liberation Theology, and

⁵⁰. Gerrie Ter Haar, *Spirit of Africa. The Healing of Archbishop Milingo of Zambia*, Hurst & Company, London, 1992, p.134

⁵¹. Kato Byang, H., *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, 1975, pp.47-49

⁵². Daryl M. Balia, *Black Methodists and White Supremacy in South Africa*, Madiba Publications, Durban, 1991, p.91.

Steve Biko's Black Consciousness movement. Increasingly, African Christians, such as Desmond Tutu or Alan Boesak, spoke with their own voices, in words that won international attention.

Increasingly, African Christians spoke for themselves, among them the Coloured Reformed Churchman, Allan Boesak; Manas Buthelezi, who became a Lutheran bishop, and Desmond Tutu, who won the Nobel Peace prize, and became Archbishop of Cape Town. They were critical of an 'African thoelogy', propounded elsewhere in Africa, that was more concerned with the vindication of traditional religions than with contemporary social and political reality. To those born in the cities, rural eco-religions were of marginal relevance, anyway.

Not all the advocates of contextual theology, as it was called, were black; they included the white South African Dominican, Albert Nolan, and the Afrikaner Reformed Churchman, Beyers Naude.

3.4. The Role of the Religious Leader

In African traditional religion the main elements are prophecy and healing of the people. Independent church leaders inherited the roles of prophets (diviners) and healers of traditional religion. In the church they are the conductors of Christian rituals and are also Christian prophets and Christian healers. This nativisation of church leaders is not however uniform. The

dominant kinship pattern gives rise to two different sub-types of leader, the chief and the prophet⁵³. The distinction between chiefs and prophet leaders corresponds to an organisational distinction between Ethiopian and Zionist Churches, and each leadership type is the outcome of a blend between the kingship pattern and one or other diverging patterns consistent with the difference between the two types of churches. "In the Ethiopian Church the kingship pattern is modified by the adaptation of leader and mass to the requirements of the modern White civilisation. In the Zionist Church this same kingship pattern is modified by a combination with another strong leadership pattern within Zulu society; that of the diviner or witch-finder(isangoma). The outcome of this development is the Zionist prophet".

3.5. The Tolerance of Ancestral Worship

The independent churches allow ancestral worship. But they do not entirely agree with the expression of ancestral worship because the ancestor is not God: they prefer to use the term "ancestor veneration". These practices have contributed to the development of traditional worship elements in the independent church which have built their own identities and could cultivate an independent church culture which is distinguished from white church culture.

53. Sundkler, 1961, p.109

To the first Ceza missionary anything which had to do with this rite was as a matter of course unacceptable in the Christian Church⁵⁴. The first catechists, on his instruction, argued against any adaptation of the rite, "for the soul is already in heaven, and the Gospel is against any such ceremony of remembrance".

Soon, however, there was a change. About twenty to thirty years after the first beginnings of the Church as Ceza the *ukubuyisa* rite was already definitely re-adapted as a Christian *ukubuyisa*-ceremony (*ukubuyisa* means 'to bring back'[the shades]; *ukubusisa*: to bless). In 1958, when the change took place they felt they had the blessing of one of the most influential lady missionaries, a nurse and midwife. "It is only remembrance of the burial", she is reputed to have told her Zulu friends, as there should be remembrance ceremonies of the days of baptism and of confirmation.

Traditional *ukubuyisa* is now referred to as *umsebenzi*(work) by the non-Christians; the Christianised rite is, on the other hand, simply called *umkhuleko*(prayer), and "most of the Christians, more especially the Zionists, believe that with their pastor they come to remove the darkness of death and to bless everything".

54. Sundkler, *ibid*, p.269

3.6. Mode and Procedure of Worship

As I have already mentioned (Chapter 3.1.2.3) traditional religion consists of two major stages: divining and healing (the main role of the Isangoma). Independent church worship, as we see in the figure below, consists of four major stages: opening, prayer, preaching and healing. The two stages of prayer and preaching can be compared to the divining stages of traditional religion. However most of the mainline Protestant churches (White churches) have three major stages: opening, preaching and response. The prayer time is not a separate stage and is included in the worship, and healing is not generally regarded as an important step in the service. In the Zionist Church the prayer time is a separate, main stage of the worship and the minister and members desire to go into ecstasy during the prayer time. After the preaching stage, healing is emphasised as a response of the Lord.

Stages

Zionist	1. opening	2. prayer	3. preaching	4. healing
Protestant	1. opening	2. preaching	3. response	

3.7. The Role of Women in the Independent Church

Just as the role of women played a major part in traditional

religious life, in independent churches the role of women is very strong in church growth and strengthening church organisation through cell groups and contributing service in different ways in addition to financial support.

Some of the leaders are women, and these are fully accepted and respected by their followers. Women often predominate in these churches; the first Swazi Zionist, for example was a woman, Johanna Nxumalo⁵⁵, who joined in 1913. Some churches were founded by women, such as Ma Christina Nku, and Ma Mbele. Typically, they concentrate on prayer and healing, while a husband, often with the title of bishop, organises the church.

3.8. No Idol

As I have already mentioned the view of God in the chapter 1. 3 as the same concept. Therefore Zulu people have no problem in accepting Christianity. Independent church got more followers.

This is because of the fact that African have the concepts of one Highest God. Therefore Africans accept easily one Christian God, the mediator Jesus Christ and the Ten Commandments of Moses.

3.9. Similarities in Biblical and Traditional Customs

55. Isicher, *ibid*, p.314

In Zulu tradition when a ritual is held, people must remove their shoes. These customs have been kept in the Zionist Church until now. This concept also came from Exodus 3:5.

In African society, it was not deemed advisable for a youth to follow his discretion in the choice of a wife. His parents selected a wife for him because they had a wider experience respecting such matters and were therefore liable to be able to guide. In addition, the African disapproved of marrying a wife not related to him.

The Old Testament gives us an identical example in the case of Isaac's and Jacob's betrothal and marriage. In the case of Isaac we read in Genesis 24:4 that Abraham said to his servant: "But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac." In the case of Jacob we read in Genesis 28:2 - 3.

Judges 14:3 further supports the point. It reads: "Is there never a woman among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Phillistines".

In traditional Zulu society, once the parents of the boy and the girl had agreed to join their children in marriage, the first and most important step was the paying of bridewealth (lobolo). A

maiden's price was twenty head of cattle, ten sheep, a horse, a saddle and a bridle⁵⁶. We find instances of bridewealth in the Old Testament, e.g. Abraham's servant "brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah; he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things (Genesis 24:53)". Among the pastoral tribes jewels, gold and money were the usual articles that formed a woman's payment (for example, dowry in India).

In his words to Laban we learn that Jacob paid dowry for his two wives. He said to Laban: "Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle." (Genesis 31:41) The prophet Hosea knew of this transaction when he said: "And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep". (Hosea 12:12)

If Exodus 3:1 be placed before 2:21 it is possible that Moses had entered employment in furtherance of his marriage. Exodus 3:1 reads thus: "Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law," while Exodus 2:21 reads as follows: "And Moses was content to dwell with the man; and he gave Moses his daughter".

In an African society it was unlawful that a widow should be married because it was believed that her husband's younger

56. Maile, *ibid*, p.29

brother or a close relative was the right person to take care of her. Death had no power to break off the strong dowry's union. We read the same in the Scriptures, in Deuteronomy 25:5.

Among the Bapedi tribe a younger brother does not marry before his elder brother. This is similar to the occasion when Laban told Jacob: "It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn." (Genesis 29:26).

In the olden days Africans were hospitable people. There was no need for a traveller to carry provisions because he would be welcome at every villages. Food was freely and abundantly given to the travellers. The Scriptures encourage hospitality. In his epistle to the Hebrews Peter says: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2).

3.10. Mystical Belief

As I have already mentioned, (chapter 1. 4) prophecy is very important in traditional religion. In independent churches, prophecy, dream and vision are asserted, so depending on these elements, people have a tendency towards mystical belief and they also have a tendency to desire the special gift of the Holy Spirit. Many of the church members have the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, interpretation, prophecy,

healing etcetera.

3.11. Congregational Meeting as Festival

African people have many festivals in their traditions. They like to enjoy festivals to foster harmony in the community, to appease the spirits of the deceased, direct the consciousness of their lives away from some dangerous influences and express thanks to God. As a result of their traditional idea they expect festive church meetings. In the case of the Shembe church, two great church festivals established themselves; the January Feast of the Tabernacles on the Inhlankakazi Mountain, and the great July Festival at the Ekuphakameni headquarters⁵⁷.

3.12. Healing

Shembe's mysterious power was seen particularly in connection with healing⁵⁸. A patient who turned to him would sometimes have to wait a considerable time. The suspense added to the earlier expectation with which the patient anticipated the result. His son, Johannes Galilee Shembe, is reputed to have inherited some of his father's healing power.

Many church leaders have the power of healing and the healing is

57. Sundkler, *ibid*, p.168

58. *ibid*, p.172

one of the main part of service. For example, Emanuel Milingo formerly Archbishop of Lusaka in Zambia⁵⁹. People go to church to obtain healing, just as many people want to Jesus for healing(Matthew 8:16).

3.13. Community Consciousness of "Simunye"

Africans do not dissociate religion from other departments of life. One writer who summarises the Nigerian reactions to Christianity reaches the conclusion that 'Christianity has impressed many as being largely a social organisation capable of worshipping God and mammon simultaneously, and demanding payment for the symbols of membership, the administration of the sacrament⁶⁰.

In the case of St John's Presbyterian Church near Stanger where I am working, we have a system of membership fees in which members pay a certain amount of money annually to retain their membership. This system operates in many black churches including black congregations which belong to white mainline churches. This demonstrates clearly the meaning of the admission fee of particular social membership. Members of Black churches generally wear a distinguishing church uniform which is designed in different styles and colours to symbolise the content of their

⁵⁹. Gerrie Ter Haar, op cit., p.203

⁶⁰. Mbiti, *ibid*, p.444

faith. These practices are the expression of community consciousness.

In conclusion, the Church of Christ is not uniform but universal. This universality or Catholicity stimulates full freedom for the local expression of faith, thus representing what the great Epistle of the Catholic Church calls the "multi-coloured" wisdom of God, Eph.3:10.

With some exceptions, for example, the Shembe's and the Khambule's and a few others. There are a number of Zionist churches which in intention and confession are as loyal to Jesus the Christ as Mission-related churches.

The "Gospel" churches and the Pentecostals, on the other hand, regard the activities of Zionists as a threat to the purity of the Gospel message. And all these are determined to draw a sharp line between themselves on the one side and Shembe, Lekganyane or Limba on the other.

However, for some, (e.g. Idowu) the concept of God in African traditional religion is indeed essentially the same as that in Christianity, and perhaps even more advanced. (Kibidho and Setiloane) From broader perspective the continuity between 'African traditional theology' and 'African Theology' has also recently been defended by Gwinyai Muzorewa. A less extreme

position is taken by writers such as Mbiti and Nyamiti, who see African religions as a sort of 'preparation for the Gospel', in the sense that these religions expose a spiritual need which may be answered in Christ.

A related question is the role of the African Independent Churches, which are an important part of the multiplicity of new religious movements of all sorts in Africa today. These have attempted to bring Christian faith and practice into closer relationship with African culture, and some of them have attempted a synthesis with aspects of African religion. A great deal of research has been carried out on these bodies, but more from historical and sociological than from theological perspectives. African Independent Churches are becoming more and more accepted as legitimate examples of African Christian spirituality, and some (e.g. the Kimbanguists and the Church of the Lord Aladura) have joined the World Council of Churches. Some theologians (see e.g. the article by Sawyer) are critical of the general theology of some of these Churches, while others (e.g. Appiah-Kubi) are openly enthusiastic at their apparent ability to deal with physical and spiritual problems faced by African Christians. Each independent Church demands a sympathetic study, not only of its theology but also of its Christian practice; this too is a task that African theologians are beginning to take in hand.

CHAPTER FOUR SHAMANISM AS THE TRADITIONAL RELIGION AMONGST THE KOREAN POPULATION

INTRODUCTION

1. THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SHAMANISM

Primitive religious impulses are present in the human unconscious prior to being articulated, codified or structured in a rational, philosophical system. These impulses are expressed in the ancient folk-lore of every people, and are a powerful life phenomenon which pre-exists critical analysis or artificial construction. Indeed, the primary religious experience is not an element of life or a mode of knowledge. It is itself equated with life. The traditional folk-lore religion of Korea may be regarded as Shamanism. In any study of the origin of religion in Korean ancient periods, the faithful conception of the Korean people and the changes in Korean society, particular attention to Shamanism is required.

Shamanism was the only religion present in Korean society prior to the arrival of Buddhism in the fourth century.¹ The earliest references to Shamanism are to be found in the

1. You Dong Sik, Korean Religions and Christianity (Dae Han Christianity Books, Seoul, 1979) p.15

records² of King Nam-Hae of the first century Silla Dynasty. In a broad sense Shamanism may be termed a "folk-custom", given that it is the cultural remains of traditions transmitted from generation to generation. However, it can also be termed a religion because it is effectively a religious practice.

The Sudanese and Amazulu of Africa experience mystic dreams and 'sickness' in the earlier stages of their spiritual growth. These mystical experiences seem to be well established steps along the Shaman's path to a transformed and spiritual state of being and bear similarity to the Christian experience of being 'born again'.

The Japanese expression for 'Shaman'. (Yichi Kott) stems from the practice of celebration and evangelism in the public market of ancient times³. The Korean tradition of burying the dead with their possessions bears a similarity to a tradition among the 'Dubo', 'Beltiren' or 'Golden People' of Siberia and symbolises a belief in the continuation of life in another world⁴.

2. Kim Tae Gon, The Study of Korean Shamanism (Jib Moon Dang, Seoul, 1981) p.20

3. Lee Nung Hwa op. cit., p.323

4. Kim Tae Gon, op. cit. p.324

Accordingly, Shamans or middlemen, appeared to mediate between the people and the spirit world, and faith in Shamanism itself arose. The roots of Korean Shamanism can be found in the Bronze Age⁵, with the Shamans of North America and the "Puriat" religion of Siberia. When natural calamities occur, people are frightened by nature and seek to align themselves or identify with that power. As Shamanism is a sort of spiritualism and polydemonism, it is fostered by circumstances of natural disaster. The role of the Shaman is to mediate between humanity and the powers of nature, to establish a bridge between human frailty and potent nature, and thus the beliefs of Shamanism are fostered.

The Shaman is a dancer or worshipper who links heaven and earth. The fact that the Shaman mediates between the realms, and partakes of both, is the essence and end of Shamanistic religious activity. Through spiritual dancing and worship, a Shaman is seen as bringing together heaven and earth. It can be said that a Shaman is something of a religious agent, overseeing religious rites in the service of an ancient God. Lee Nung-Hwa regarded Shamanism as a religion⁶.

Korea was not the only region in which Shamanism, as a

5. Ibid.

6. Lee Nung Hwa, The searching of Cho Seon Shamanism (Dong Moon Seon, Seoul, 1991) p.12

religion was practiced. Shamanism was a common primitive religion among all the Ural-Ataic races (those of Mongolia, Manchuria, Korea, Japan) originating in central Siberia⁷.

We can assert that Shamanism in Korea was formed and prospered with the establishing of nationhood because the mythological story of 'Tan Gun', the founding father of the Korean nation, itself includes strong Shamanistic elements.

Many scholars agree with Choi, Nam-Seon who perceived 'Tan-Gun' as a Shaman⁸. The term 'Tan-Gun' has a similar pronunciation to 'Tan-Gul' which, to this day, is taken to mean 'Shaman', and which bears a similarity to the Mongolian word 'Tengri'⁹, meaning 'man of heaven' or 'man who worships'. This Shamanism was steadily and continually transmitted from generation to generation as the traditional religion of Korea.

Spiritual worship, as such, only began among primitive peoples once they had become familiar with the concept of 'spirit'. The concept that 'spirit' could be found in non-human forms led to the emergence of Shamanism and eventually to the idea of a 'Godhead'. The earliest recorded Shaman of Korea was

7. Yoo Dong Sik, Op. Cit. Korean Religions and Christianity p.15 ff.

8. Ibid., p.20.

9. Ibid.

'NamHae', second King of the Silla Dynasty. This considerably predates Buddhism which entered Korea in the fourth century.

We are able to determine that Korean Shamanism originated in the Bronze Age¹⁰. There are many legends in Korea about the origins of the Shaman. Choi Nam Seon asserts that Dan Gun is Shaman¹¹. The name 'Dan Gun' means 'Adult' or King who makes an altar and Dan Gun constructed a nation under the Shamanistic tree called Sin Dan Su. We can compare this legend with the account of Abraham constructing an altar under the Baobab tree. Dan Gun was born Hwan Ung, the son of Hwan In, and married Ung Nyeo, (bear of the earth) (God). So, Dan Gun means 'intermediary between God and Humanity'. Thus, in this role of mediator Dan Gun is the Shaman. The earliest Shamans were identified in various accounts, e.g. Beob U Hwa Sang, who was introduced as a Buddhist 'priestess or Seon Nyeo (an angel) princess Gong Sim, known as the daughter of the King; Ah Wang who was also known as a laywoman or daughter of a king' and princess Bari in Cheju Island. All these persons were reputed to be the original Shamans¹².

10. Ibid, p.21

11. You Dong Sik, op. cit., p.20

12. O Byong Se, Dictionary of Theology (The Korea Society for Reformed Faith and Action, Kimpo, Korea, 1984) p.257.

The oldest official Korean record of a Shaman appears in the book Sam Kuk Yusa (the history of the three kingdoms period). In the relevant extract we find reference to the title of Shaman, and discover that the Shaman worshipped evil spirits and was connected with ritual. There are a number of records of Shamanist activity at this time. One reports that in the third year (264 A.D.) of King Michu of the Silla Dynasty, perhaps the woman Ung Nyeo belonged to a family whose totem was the bear. The exact meaning of the name is 'bears woman'.

A Shaman treated the illness of the princess. A second record refers to an event in the 19th year of King Yu Ri of the Koku Ryeo Dynasty when a Shaman assisted in the hearing of the King. In the periods of King Cha Dae and King San Sang Shamans prophesied justice, fortune and misfortune. Also, during the reign of King Euija of the Back Je dynasty, the King summoned a Shaman for information about symptoms of illness.¹³

The above stories all indicate that professional Shamans were active during the three kingdoms period. Shamanism played a role in the national rites of the three kingdoms period. During the Silla dynasty it formed the basis of the dominant philosophy, the 'Hwarang Do'. Also during this period, Kings

13. Choi Jung Hyon, Korean Church and Shamanism (Seong Kwang Press, Seoul, 1993) pp.21-22

were termed 'Kosogan', 'Chauchaung' or 'Chachung'. The eighth century Silla scholar¹⁴, Kim Dae Moon, drew attention to the fact that in the Korean language 'Chuachung' could be interpreted as 'Shaman'.

During the Koryeo Dynasty, Shamans participated in the programmes of Ki Woo Je (a nation-wide ceremony to bring rain); Sa Eun Je; Seong Hwang Je (Shrine worship) and Yeok Je (healing ritual). The Koryeo Dynasty actively encouraged the growth and spread of Buddhism but still retained certain significant national ceremonies that were entirely Shamanistic in nature. Of the two major national ceremonies one was a Buddhist (Yeon Dung Hoe, a dedication to Buddha) and the other, Shamanist ('Palgwanhwe', in honour of the celestial King and five significant mountains and rivers). The ritual of 'Palgwanhue' required the participation of many Shamans.

In the Lee Dynasty, the number of Shamans increased greatly¹⁵ and they functioned as priests, prophets and healers at important personal, domestic, social, royal and national occasions. During the period of the Chosun Dynasty, Shamanism was forced out to a degree by the philosophical ethic and political ideology of Confucianism and barely continued to

14. Ibid., p.21.

15. Ibid, p.22

exist as a religious belief among the greater populace. On the other hand, Confucianism was perceived to be the religion of the nobility, while Shamanism could adhere more closely to the realities of life as experienced by the subject classes. The 'Dangolpan' system, in which each Shaman operated within a clear monopolistic district, can be seen as proof of this.¹⁶ Nowadays, Shamans still perform Ki Woo (rain ceremony), Sa Eun (thanksgiving ceremony), Ki Ja (ceremony to conceive a son), and Taek (ceremony for peace in the home) and Dae Gam Nori (ceremony to appease ancestors). They also offer prayers for healing and the aversion of misfortune, and perform a variety of other rituals.¹⁷ This Shamanism was steadily and continually transmitted from generation to generation as the traditional religion of Korea. The contemporary scientific community has treated Shamanism as a superstition and Shamans can be seen to be declining in number. Nonetheless, Shamanism still underlies the many historical layers of Korean religious culture.¹⁸

2. SHAMANISM AS FOLK RELIGION, ART AND CUSTOM

During the period when it was the traditional Korean religion,

16. Kim Tae Gon, op cit., The Study of Korean Shamanism, pp.261-269

17. Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., p.22

18. Ibid

Shamanism influenced, to a large degree, Korean customs and art. Annual public celebrations continue to include Shamanistic rites. Traditional customs derived from Shamanistic rites, starting from the New Year rite through to the year-end rite, according to the moon calendar. In the New year, people salute their elders and worship their ancestors at home and in private mausolea. They also worship the house god. On Jan. 3, there is a gut to prevent misfortune, and people consult clairvoyants to chart horoscopes for the ensuing year. Some groups of people travel around villages playing music in various homes to exorcise evil spirits by means of noise. On Jan. 14, the exteriors of houses are cleaned and the resulting waste burned. Villagers engage in stone-throwing combat with inhabitants of neighbouring villages; the winning village is regarded as liable to have good fortune for the following year. Community Gut led by Shamans are held around this period, and masked dancing forms part of the festivities. Annual traditional ceremonies which commence in similar fashion are Dan O in May, Chu seek in August, Dong Ji in November, and the year closes ceremoniously with Se su in December, when a light is displayed enshrined. All these activities are conflated with Shamanistic practice. Nowadays also, according to Shamanistic thought, spirits exist in all objects. Shamanism was the centre and mainstream of cultural life and is manifested in a variety of art forms. We find a basis for Korean traditional religion in the

etymological research conducted by scholars who, in researching the origins of words, locate the genesis of concepts in the earliest religious thought of our ancestors, and identifying within that the presence of Shamanism. In literature such as the folk narratives and folk songs of oral literature, tales of reincarnation and human and animal metamorphoses and happy endings are common. These reflect the Shamanistic themes of eternal spiritual life and ultimate happiness.¹⁹ Pictorial art, especially portraits, were also influenced by Shamanistic representations of gods, spirits and humans. Shamanistic music was a dominant component of ancient music, and Shamanistic dance is the basis of all later Korean traditional dance. The dialogue of Shamanistic gut subsequently evolved into the fuller enactment of drama.

All aspects of fine art have been influenced by Shamanism, including traditional music, art, dance and Korean classical opera. The modern Korean government supports the preservation of traditional culture, recognising the significance of Shamanistic elements. Many Shamans have in fact been classified as "cultural assets" in themselves.²⁰ There are many amongst Korean traditional musicians whose musical skills and knowledge were acquired through training in Shamanistic uses

19. Shin Tae Ung, The Perception of Spirits, in Korean Traditional Faith (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol.60, Seoul, 1986)pp.65-121

20. Kim Tae Gon, op cit, The Study of Korean Shamanism, p.274

of music. Korean traditional dance, which is played in modern society, is also come from the origin of Shamans dance which is played in 'Gut'. Therefore, when a new car is bought, a new building constructed, or production in a new factory commences, spiritual rites are conducted to ensure the success of the enterprise. Even university students hold special rites when elected to student organisations, despite the ultra modernity of their social context and their social status as members of an intelligentsia. Moreover, government offices commence work in the new year after holding specific spiritual rites. The name 'Han' (as the Korean people call themselves) can be interpreted as meaning 'big, high and right', an interpretation which, in the Korean mind, is in keeping with the Shamanistic pursuit of eternal being. The winter solstice is the shortest day of the year in Korea. As the days lengthen from 22 Dec., Koreans traditionally eat red bean soup to repel evil spirits, a custom which persists even in modern times. Driving away evil spirits is the task of the Shaman, and Koreans include this function of the Shaman in their customs. The red colour of the red beans is believed to be an object of fear to evil spirits. When the evil spirits flee, fortune and sunlight shine upon the believers, hence the commemoration of the winter solstice in the manner described, with the additional precaution of painting the door frame and lintel with red bean soup. This belief in the power of the colour red to repel or dispel evil is apparent also in the use of red

pillars, etc. in Buddhist temples. (The painting of door-frames with red in Korea is, interestingly, strongly reminiscent of the Israelites painting their doorways with the red blood of lambs, described in Exodus, in order to avoid slaughter and gain redemption.) Korean people were designated 'the white-clad folk', as they commonly wore white clothing, even to funerals. The custom of wearing white funeral apparel derives from the cult of the 'white shaman'. It is noteworthy that Western countries to which 'black Shamans' migrated customarily use black as the appropriate colour for mourning. It is thus clear that Shamanism is deeply inscribed in Korean consciousness at the most profound spiritual and emotional levels. Therefore, Shamanism cannot be ignored in any discussion of Korean art, customs and life.

3. THE FUNCTION OF THE SHAMAN WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

All aspects of civilian life were governed by Shamanistic beliefs. Annual life in the village did not begin without the appropriate Shamanistic rites. Shamanism has been of major significance in all areas of Korean life throughout history, permeating culture, medicine, tradition, religion and thought. Tan Gun was the founder of the Korean nation.²¹ The meaning of Tan Gun is 'King who made an altar'. It is thus evident that

21. Harvie Conn, Case Study 2: Korea, in A Lion Hand Book, The World's Religions (Lion Publishing, Herts, England, 1982) p.138

the Korean people emerged as a branch of the Shamanistic family: their Shamanism is as ancient as their earliest forebears. According to Korean mythology²², Hwan In (God) sent his son, Hwan Ung, to earth. Hwan Ung married Ung Nyeo, which resulted in the birth of Tan Gun. The myth symbolises a union between heaven and earth, and is reminiscent of a similar tale in Genesis 6:1-4. This mythological account of their origins imparted to the Koreans a sense of being a chosen people (like the Israelites) and also affirmed the possibility of communication between humanity and god. In Egypt, a similar mythology surrounded the origins of the Pharaohs.²³ Since the religious impulses of the Korean people are so primeval and profound, and were manifested so powerfully in the ancient practices of Shamanism, the importance of the Shaman in community life is self-evident. From early times, Shamans performed specific rites. For this purpose, holy ground which is called 'Sodo' in Korean was established during the Silla dynasty. Here, sinners in search of forgiveness would submit to purification rites of a sacred nature. The name Hwa Rang was derived from the title of the Shaman, and even in modern times, in certain provinces the Shaman is addressed as Hwa Rang.

22. Ibid.

23. Min Yeong Jin, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol.4 (Bible Study Material Publisher, Seoul, 1980) pp.445-446

When female Shamans danced, they were accompanied by male Shamans on musical instruments. The male Shaman was called Hwa Raeng Yi²⁴ (which means 'a man of Hwa Rang') and female Shamans were frequently prostitutes. Nowadays, adulterous women are called 'Hwa Nyang Nyeon', an appellation which is very similar to 'Hwa Rang Nyeon', the title originally given to female Shamans. It can be supposed that the latter term has been historically modified, and that its associations are embedded in the modern term for adultresses.

Shamanism also penetrates the lives of the population. In every home, gods are enshrined in specific significant areas. For example, Sung Ju Sin, (household god), is enshrined beneath the main beam of the house; Sam Sin (birth god) resides beneath the floor of the main bedroom; Cho Sang Sin (ancestral spirits) are enshrined at the opposite end of the bedroom. The rites performed in honour of ancestors occupy a vital position in Shamanism. Eub Wang Sin (kitchen god) resides on the sink draining board; Eub Sin presides over the storeroom, and Ji Sin (earth god) inhabits the garden. Su Mun Sin is enshrined at the gate; Jeong Sin guards the fountain; Chik Sin is enshrined in the toilet. It is clearly evident that people believed that the gods governed and took care of all aspects of their lives. The presence in every village of

24. Kim Tae Gon. Op. Cit., The Study of Korean Shamanism. p.71

Seo Nang Dang (Shaman's shrine) and Jang Shung (carved, decorated wooden totem poles), testifies to the potency of Shamanistic religion and its influence on daily existence. On the mountains near to the villages there are Seung Sin Dan, or shrines to the mountain/village God who oversees the lives of the people. Shamans managed all aspects of civil life - births, funerals, the healing of the sick, farming, the construction of buildings and ships, weddings and of course village worship. Shamans are asked by people to solve their problems through out the year. Community rites conducted by the Shaman entail prayer for fruitfulness, plenteous harvest and prosperity. This ritual in shamanism is similar to those of the Canaanite religion involving the celebration of the generosity and riches of Baal. The Shaman is required to visit members of the community during the course of the year.

The Shaman performed the functions of priest, doctor, prophet and oracle²⁵. The shaman plays the role of mediator. She/He entreats god/s on behalf of humanity, and chastens humans as an agent of god/s. Another important function of the shaman in community life is divining. Korean people were used to a culture of divination. Every new year, the members of a community would gather in the living-room of their family patriarchs to foresee the significant events of the year

25. Choi Jung Hyon. Op. Cit. Korean church and Shamanism. p.34

ahead, using the I KING or other divining materials. During this ceremony, women would chant noisily to evoke the appropriate mood. Shamans were also consulted regarding forthcoming events. Shamanic predictions were generally based on five methods of divination. These were derived from natural phenomena, the realm of sacred spirits, the conduct of human affairs, sacred writings and a variety of designated instruments. The concept of the four pillars and eight traits of human nature is fundamental to the divination process. Reportedly, there are currently approximately 300 000 divination practitioners in Korea.²⁶ Shamans discharged the priestly duties of prayer to the divine, the averting of misfortune, and the dispensing of knowledge to the community. Therefore the Shaman within the ancient period would be seen as a 'holy man' acting as a leader of civil affairs. Shamans also had a leading role within the national community. Korean shamans were "white shamans"; they were not those who invited misfortune, but those who requested blessing.

Shamanism was the main ideology among the young of the national elite of the Silla Dynasty, and within the army of certain periods of the Chosun Dynasty.²⁷ National ceremonies were held, with the participation of many Shamans, with the

26. Lee Won Seob, *The true five Shamans in Lady Gyong Hyang*, Gyong Hyang Il Bo Sa, Seoul, 1993, Vol.82, p.489.

27. Lee Hung Hwa, *op cit*, *The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism*, p.102

intention of bringing rain and protecting the country from misfortune. Shamans played a leading role in the Palkwanhue²⁸, a national thanksgiving ceremony of the Koryo Dynasty. Shamans received gifts of rice and other agricultural produce in return for the services they performed. Shamans, therefore, provided the leadership necessary to every community. Shamans frequently performed Shamanistic rites at the Royal Palace. When Shamanism prospered, because the Shaman's gut were too noisy and wasteful, the government prohibited the practice. However, after the Koryo Dynasty, Shamans were identified with lower socio-economic groups and became destitute. They resorted to performing their rites in villages in exchange for rice and grain during spring and autumn. Although Shamans are socially isolated and suffer a sense of social inferiority, this alienation is neutralised by their belief in their vocation as messengers and servants of God.²⁹ Shaman was the leader of priest and doctor of family, village and country.

4. THE ESSENCE OF SHAMANISM AND THE 'GUT' AS CEREMONIAL WORSHIP

While 'Shamanism' per se can be interpreted broadly as an aspect of popular culture, the term 'Shamanism' is used here

28. Yoo Dong Sik, Op. Cit., p.31.

29. Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.60

to refer to the specific Shamanistic religion as it has been practised in Korea. The religion of 'Shamanism' has as its objective the escaping of the bonds of earthly existence, the securing of blessings and the salvation of the soul. The actual religious activity of Shamanism was expressed through the rite known as 'gut', 'puri' or 'hae'. 'Gut' means the entire ritual which the Shaman leads with song, dance and oracle. The aim of the gut is to purge, to expel evil spirits, to invoke blessing, to heal, to bring peace to the home, and to solicit rain.

'Gut' is a pure Korean word which is similar to words in other related languages: 'Gutug' in Mongolian, 'Gutug' in Turkish, 'Kutu' in Tungus³⁰. All these variations signify the concept 'happiness' or 'fortune'. The meaning of the word indicates that the Gut is essentially a ritual to bring happiness or good fortune.

In the Korean language, the word, 'Gut', originally had a wide currency in Korean expression. However, it became associated with Shamanistic ritual, and now survives only as an element of Shamanistic vocabulary. Originally, the word denoted celebration (party) and was applied to a variety of events, e.g. 'Baek-IL Gut' (100 days birthday party). However, these celebrations are now differently named, and the form 'Gut' is

30. Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., p.27

applied only to the performance of the Shaman.

The word Gut in Turkish is equivalent to 'good', 'play', 'festival', 'party' in English. This similarity is significant, because Turkish closely resembles the Korean language, and this suggests a conceptual link in the source language from which the later branches developed.

In Shamanistic rituals, the Gut is presented as two separate performances, one being a religious rite and the other a celebration. The notion of celebration for Shamanism is comparable with the Christian concept of a heavenly feast or divine celebration in the Kingdom of God. Celebrations are usually held to signal happy events or good fortune. This is why Koreans were readily able to receive the Christian teaching of a divine celebration of the 'good news': it accorded with their experience of the Shamanistic Gut.

Other Korean terms for 'gut' are 'puri' or 'hae'. These synonyms mean 'to unite or interpret difficult questions or problems'. Hence, 'Gut' also signifies the interpretation or resolution of difficulty or misfortune. In addition, 'gut' denotes bad, therefore the gut is received as an exorcism of that which is undesirable. Finally, ritual expulsion of evil and the pursuit of blessing is the real meaning of the Gut. The Shaman is called a Mudang in Korean language. The Chinese

glyph for 'mu'³¹ (meaning 'Shaman') can be interpreted as meaning 'woman who worships the intangible' or 'woman who dances to invite the spirits'. From this glyph, therefore, the word 'Shamanism' can be taken as a reference to the religious ritual or 'gut' by which spiritual blessings are sought.

5. CHARACTERISTICS OF SHAMANISM

From a careful study of the works of scholars listed above, it is clear that Korean Shamanism has three characteristics, namely:

1. Avoidance of misfortune and obtaining blessing.
2. The 'Gut' religious rite: the attainment of spiritual experience through rhythmic activities such as song and dance.
3. A conception of God which is simplistic and superficial in comparison with Japanese Shinto.

Because of those three characteristics, Korean people readily accept the God of Christianity. Since the conception of God in Shamanism is superficial, a transfer of belief is easily accomplished. The role of music in Shamanism enables Koreans

31. Lee Nung Hwa, op. cit., The searching of Cho Seon Shamanism. p.12

to identify with the hymns and praise practices of Christianity, and their habit of seeking blessing through religious rites makes them susceptible to the notion of a kingdom of God attained through Hope, faith and salvation.

Korean Shamanism, unlike many other forms of Shamanism, is based on the notion of the imminence, or descent, of God rather than on a belief in the ecstatic escape of the human spirit into the transcendent supernatural realm. There is a parallel here with the Christian New Testament, e.g. in Acts 16:16, where St. Paul encountered a woman possessed by spirits, and in I Samuel 29:9, where a woman who is a medium in Endor is mentioned. Shaman are perceived as quasi-divine, possessing a peculiar power from God, therefore people believe that the anger of God can be appeased by the Shaman, and there is a sense of the necessity to seek the favour of God through worship.

Shamans believe in the eternal life of the soul, therefore mystical religious experience is a vital element of Shamanism which is a highly spiritual religion. Shamanistic Korean Christians thus regard the experience of faith as extremely important.

Shamans oppose Christianity, believing that the Shamanistic God is angered by defecting of believers to Christianity and

at war with christian God.³² For them, the encounter between Shamanism and Christianity is a site of spiritual conflict, eg. in one instance, a Korean Shaman had prepared a 'Gut Sang' (feast table) as part of a religious rite. On opening the lid of the cauldron in which one of the delicacies had been prepared, he/she discovered that the 'DDEOK' (delicatessen for the rite) had become discoloured. This was attributed to the fact that a Christian member of the household had previously lifted the lid, thereby dishonouring the food, so that it was no longer holy. The Shaman proceeded to recommence the ritual, preparing fresh DDEOK³³ to replace that which had been defiled.

A further example of the tension between the two religions is the belief that the presence of a christian at a Gut ceremony prevents the descent of the spirit of God, rendering the ritual futile.

Thus it is clear that Shamanism as a religion is an extremely powerful spiritual force.

Shamanism denies the reality of the temporal, material world, and creates a new world and new humans. This belief in the

32. Kim Ki Suk, The Ruler of the Kingdom of the Air (in the Kidok Kong Bo Newspaper in Korea, 1956, Seoul, 1993, October, 2), and Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.57

33. DDEOK is Korean traditional rice cake.

creation or realisation of an alternative realm of existence has an affinity with the doctrines of Christianity. However, Christianity differs somewhat in two respects. It stresses the concept of eternal life without denying the reality of the secular, and it excludes from eternal union with God those sinful beings who reject salvation. Because of the emphasis of Shamanism on the unreality of the material world, many christian theologians who are sympathetic to this perspective interest themselves in the aboriginalization of Christianity and readily incorporate elements of Shamanistic belief into traditional western orthodoxy.

Shamanism maintains that Shamans are able to expel evil through ceremonial song and dance. Similarly, christians believe that their praise and worship placate God, thereby saving them from misfortune and punishment.

Shamanism is a very accommodating religion, which easily embraces elements of foreign or alien beliefs. The use of song and dance to establish contact with the spiritual world can be a means of opening the self, of releasing the individual from inhibitions. Shamanism is extremely potent and resilient, and therefore no imported religions have succeeded in superseding it. Shamanism has been superficially influenced by other religions, but the essence of Shamanism remains undiluted and unchanged.

As the religion practised by Korean people for some thousands of years, Shamanism has been internalised to such an extent that its power to shape religious perceptions and the processes of the national consciousness is immense.

Shamanism has four major features. Its character is differential, pervasive, continuous and it is motivated by the quest for eternity. These features of Shamanism derive from an early interweaving of Shamanism and Confucianism which together moulded the consciousness of the original Korean people.

CHAPTER FIVE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF KOREAN CHURCH GROWTH

A1. Special Characteristics of Korean Church Growth

The Korean Church has always been regarded as unique, and has displayed amazing growth among the world's Christian churches; particularly during this century. Dr Allen, who entered Korea in 1884, and the missionaries Underwood and Apenseller, who entered in 1885, were responsible for the formation of the Korean Protestant Church¹. In 1985 the Korean Church reached its centennial and it is miraculous that in such a short period 25% of the Korean population had accepted the Christian Gospel.² This has earned the respect of Christian churches all over the world. There are many Christian churches and ministers in Korea at present, and many large congregations have appeared. The number of theological students is also increasing explosively. To my knowledge, the Presbyterian Theological Seminary alone has approximately 2,500 students.

1.1. The Meaning of Church Growth

We can say that a church grows in several ways. The first is

¹. Kim ong Seon, The Study of Korean Church history, Ki Dok Kyo Moon Sa, Seoul, 1993

². Han Cheol Ha, Korean Church and World Mission, in 'what do you think of Korean Church?' (Shin Mang Ae Press, Seoul, 1989) p.258

numerically. There are normally three approaches to determining church membership: 'registered members', 'baptised members'; and 'attending members' (those who attend Sunday services). These days, we tend to use the number of 'attending members' regardless of the number of 'registered members' submitted in a church's formal report. Nonetheless the Korean church shows a distinctive increase in all three areas.

The second factor in determining church growth is 'internal maturity'; that is, the increasing activity of the congregation and the nature of its operations. Thirdly, there is 'biblical growth' - that is the 'Christian life' or the degree to which biblical patterns and practice are found in daily life. I divide the term 'christian' into three classes: attending member; registered member; and disciple-member. An attending member would be one who attends church with an 'interest' in Christianity. A registered member would be one who is merely baptised and registered with the church. A disciple-member may be regarded as a true Christian, fully active in the life and work of the church.

1.2. Numerical Growth

The spread of world christianity reveals that 66% of Christians

are of coloured race, while 34% are white³. Among the 'non-western' churches, the Korean church has been regarded as the most capable⁴. There are currently twelve million Korean Christians; twenty-five per cent of the South Korean population. Such explosive growth is amazing, particularly considering the briefness of the mission's history. The main characteristic of Korean Church growth has been its suddenness. Korea has the largest Full Gospel Central Church, Presbyterian and Methodist congregations in the world.

1.3. External Growth

The Korean church has also grown externally. With the economic development that took place in Korea in the sixties and seventies, the Korean Church not only increased church membership, but also church finances. Members make special voluntary donations as well as 'one-tenth contributions' or 'tithes'. Each church has its own building in proportion to its membership, and is conscious of showing its growth externally. Newer and larger buildings are constructed, given the funds, to accommodate an increase in membership. Investment is also made in establishments and external assets. Each church is eager to purchase church vehicles and to build a Sunday-school hall, a

3. Seo, Jeong Woon, World Mission and Korean Presbyterian Church (Pul Bit Ministry Vol. 106, 1991) p.58

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4. Ibid.

mountain prayer house, a minister's house, and a church cemetery. Furthermore, each church does its best to support small, poorer congregations, various social-work organisations and overseas mission work. Korean churches have many theological schools and seminaries and students in relation to the population. For example, my denominational church (The Presbyterian Church of Korea, PCK) has 6 theological seminaries and 31 Bible colleges.

1.4. Self-Generated Growth

Another characteristic of Korean Church growth is self-generated growth from the early mission period. Before the first Protestant missionary entered Korea the "Sorae congregation" had already been founded in Hwang-Hae province⁵. Pastor Underwood, the first missionary in Korea, entered Korea with Mark's gospel, which had been translated in Japan by Lee, Soo Jung⁶. Soo Jeong Lee visited Japan in September 1882 as an official representative of the government. He had been dispatched by the queen of the Korean Lee dynasty. He met Juda Jen who was an agricultural scholar. Mr. Jen introduced Lee to modern agricultural technical developments and modern management systems and he also presented to Lee a Bible in Chinese characters. Mr. Lee read the Bible in

⁵. Kim Young Han, Korean Christianity and Faith (Collectio of Treatises of Korean Christianity Vol.5, Pung Man, Seoul) p.22

⁶. Kim Yang Seon, op cit., pp.55-63 and Kwon Young Sam, "Local Trip to Jeong Dong" (Ministry and Theology, Vol.48, Tyrannus Books, Seoul, 1993) p.141

his lodging. After a while Juda invited him to attend a Christmas service in his church. Mr Lee decided to be baptised in the Christian religion. He was baptised in Easter Sunday on 25 April 1883 in Sheba church. The missionaries did not visit the villages to convert people, but rather to teach and baptise those who had already accepted Christ.⁷ When Father Joo, Moon-Mo came to Korea from China, he was very surprised to find that four thousand believers already existed in Korea.⁸

Mr Lee Eung-Chan and friends acted as language teachers for Pastors Ross and McIntyre. They were baptised and helped to translate the Bible into Korean.⁹ Mr Seo, Sang-Ryun, who lived in the city of Eui-Ju went to China in search of a pastor¹⁰. He was baptised, and after returning to Korea, founded the first Protestant Church in the town of So-Rae, in Hwang-Hae Do province¹¹.

After having established a complete organisation, the Korean Church itself attempted to spread the gospel. Upon founding the

7. Roy E. Sheares, The History of Korean Church Growth (The Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1966) p.48.

8. Donald E. Hoke, The Church in Asia (Moody Press, Chicago, 1975) p.376

9. Choi Jung Hyon, Korean Church and Shamanism (Seong Kwang Press, 1993) p.119

10. Ibid.

11. Lee Young Hyeon. Korean Christian History (Concordia, Seoul, 1983) p.64

first Presbytery, the Church appointed missionaries to be dispatched at the same time that the first graduation ceremony of the theological seminary took place¹². In 1912, when the first general assembly was held¹³, a decision was taken to send missionaries to China. Three pastors and their families were accordingly posted to China the following year.

1.5. Growth of the Presbyterian and Full Gospel Churches

The fourth characteristic of growth in the Korean Church was the specific growth of the Presbyterian Church. In the seventies, the Full Gospel¹⁴ Church grew remarkably alongside the Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian Churches still hold sixty per cent of Korean Protestants¹⁵. The reasons for the rapid Presbyterian and Full Gospel Church growth are related to certain Shamanistic elements. (Further details will be discussed in Chapter Six). These Shamanistic elements are the topic of my thesis. From early in its history the Presbyterian Church has

12. Seo Jeong Woon, op cit., p.57

13. Ibid.

14. There are two main Pentecostal churches in Korea: The Full Gospel Church and the Holiness Assembly of God. For convenience sake, reference will be made in this thesis to the Full Gospel church, which should be understood to include the Holiness Assembly of God.

15. Patrick Johnstone, Operation World, WEC Press. Bucks England, 1990, p.269

been more conservative than the Methodist.¹⁶ This distinctive leaning towards conservatism may be linked to the conservatism evident in Shamanism. The Korean Full Gospel Church also contained Shamanistic elements, which have been present since its early origins.

The world-wide Pentecostal movement with its emphasis on intense spiritual experience, strong faith and religious zeal accorded well with the intrinsic qualities of Shamanism. The centrality of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal worship powerfully connected with Shamanistic beliefs concerning faith, healing and miracles. Shamans still enlist spirits to aid in healing and the performing of miracles today, just as the Pentecostal Church invokes the power of the Holy Spirit to these ends.

1.6. Activities of Women's Associations

Within the church women perform mainly auxiliary work (receptions, entertainment, cleaning, etc.) However, they also play a major role in evangelical work and provide a large portion of the Church's financial support. They also are the driving force behind the Church's "prayer movement". Korean Christian women often fast for as many as forty days. This period is filled with prayer. Quiet obedience is considered an important

16. Kim Young Han, op cit., Korean Christianity and Faith, pp.46-47

virtue among Korean women. However, they have displayed their strength and ability in the midst of difficult circumstances. The history books are filled with stories of such women.

A large building, known as the Women's Association Building¹⁷, is a visible expression of the important role of women in the church. This is the largest of the Christian buildings in Korea. At this stage the Men's Association does not have its own building.

1.7. Growth as a Popular Religion

Christianity has become a formidable influence within Korean society. Throughout the sixties and seventies it was common for many businesses, mainly shops, to remain open on Sundays. "Incomplete" Christians also continued to open their shops on Sundays. The Korean Church was not then as powerful as it is today. The situation changed in the nineteen eighties, however, when the number of Korean Christians increased significantly. Christians began to close their businesses on Sundays. Non-Christians began to do the same when it became clear that many people were no longer shopping on Sundays. By the eighties, it had become economically feasible for people not to work on Sundays. The practice, therefore, became popular even among non-Christians. It is generally accepted that Christian students

17. The eighteen-storey building was erected in 1987

pray before meals taken at school. The Korean population tends to accept Christians as both ethical and good. In the nineteen seventies and eighties many middle-class Koreans became Christian, both in Seoul and throughout the country. The Christian position had become widely accepted.

1.8. Periods of Growth

In the nineteen tens, seventies and eighties, growth in the Korean church has been continuous, there have, nonetheless, been specific periods of rapid growth. For example, the Korean Church grew very rapidly during the nineteen thirties, sixties and seventies¹⁸. These revival periods coincided with periods of political oppression within the country which was also when a connection between Christianity and Shamanism was established.

1.9. Growth as a Similar Shamanistic Church

People normally want to be Christian without abandoning their own ethnicity, culture and language. These elements are all closely united for Korean people. This case is similar to the earlier introduction of foreign religions to Korea, for example Buddhism and Confucianism which spread easily against the background of Shamanism.

18. Lee Hun Ku, Korean traditional Religion and Korean church (Yeon Hab, Seoul 1992) p.198

Donald McGavran indicates that church growth will take place phenomenally in a culture which has the religious background of animism.¹⁹ This is true of the Korean church which grew very quickly with its animistic background.

The style of Korean ministry of earlier Christian pastors who were performing the role of shaman was helpful to church growth. For example, Korean ministers ministering to their parishioners who were agricultural workers often worked alongside them in the fields. The ministers are often assisted with produce by their congregation members. The ministers performed these duties like the Shamans did previously for their followers. Therefore people recognised that pastors are men whom they need in the community. They held the Christian ministers and the church in high regard. People regarded the pastors as playing the role of shaman. In the case of the Korean church in America, Korean pastors helped new colonial immigrants in every way: fetching them from the airport, getting residence permits from home affairs, applying for school places for their children, helping them to find employment and orienting them to their new surroundings. I, who work in a similar diaspora Korean community, have found the same situation in Durban, South Africa. That is why many Korean ministers, as well as praying for spiritual healing, also learned the skill of acupuncture to treat the physical diseases of their

19. McGavran, Donald, Understanding Church Growth (William B, Eerdmans, USA, 1970) p.357.

congregations. Many missionaries, in particular, learned acupuncture which was needed for their work in the mission field. Chung Yang-Oh who is working in East London, is a very professional acupuncturist.

2. Elements of Growth

2.1. Internal Elements of Growth

2.1.1. Early morning prayer meetings and mountain prayer

The reason for the strength and energy of the Korean Church is the stress laid upon a positive prayer movement, in particular early morning prayer meetings and mountain prayer (or prayer retreats). Both are widely known within the Korean Church.

A great many "mountains of prayer" may be found in Korea. These can also be termed "prayer houses" or "retreats". These retreats are open to all, regardless of denomination. All congregations hold early morning prayer meetings at either 4:00 a.m. or 5:00 a.m., every day without exception. Although this is tiring, particularly for ministers, it is nevertheless seen as an important source of spiritual power, uniting the congregation and increasing its abilities.

For example, Myong-Seong Presbyterian Church, which has-thirty-thousand members in Seoul is extremely successful with regard to

its early morning prayer meetings.²⁰ Approximately ten thousand of its members attend early morning prayer meetings every day.

The monks of the European Middle Ages held early morning prayers and today many Christians have a "quiet time" in the morning. However, the early morning prayer meetings of Korea are part of a system unique to the Korean Church. Korean Christians, particularly those who live in the countryside, will often walk as many as eight kilometres to attend the early morning prayer meetings of their church. This enthusiasm is responsible for the growth of the Korean Church. Korean ministers, even when on annual leave, are considered by their congregations to be always on duty.

Korean Christians recall that, in important or difficult times, Jesus would conduct early morning prayers and mountain retreats.

2.1.2. Home visitations

Just as early morning prayer meetings and mountain retreats are elements in a church's spiritual growth, so too are home-visits by ministers, particularly for the purpose of counselling. People regard the visiting of homes as a reflection of a minister's interest in church members homes and families. Ministers are encouraged to visit often. Through home-visits,

20. Shin Seong Jong, The Growth Churches of Korea (The Pastoral Monthly, Vol.197, Seoul) p.182

members are kept interested in church affairs. Furthermore, many believe that a visiting minister brings blessings upon a home, and that the Lord himself accompanies the minister to the home.

Through home-visits a minister may counsel members and minister on their behalf, and in so doing comes to know his congregation well. Furthermore, by visiting the homes of those who are not necessarily committed Christians a minister may bring about an increased interest by virtue of his devotion and concern.

2.1.3. Intense evangelical activity of ministers and laymen

Prior to the emergence of the current large congregations, fewer ministers were sufficient to the task. Each minister was assisted by a secretary and a "steward". Ministers worked devotedly, leading services, administering and counselling, preaching, visiting events and organising meetings. Through their tireless efforts such ministers contributed to the rapid growth of the church.

Traditionally Korean pastors were "on duty" twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty five days a year. Currently, ministers receive one or two weeks annual vacation in order to attend to family matters. Besides the intense activity of ministers, the evangelical work of laymen has been a big factor

in the growth of the Korean Church. The missionary Fenwilk²¹ was impressed by the powerful capacity of Korean evangelists, rather than missionaries, to spread the gospel. Early Korean Christianity produced many bible-sellers and evangelical literature was sold by the roadside and in homes. These vendors were called "Yesu Jaeng YI"²², (specialists for Jesus). Their efforts to spread the Gospel were frenetic, and their contribution towards the growth of the Korean Christian church cannot be overestimated. According to the "thirtieth anniversary memorial book of Chosun Southern Methodist Church" by Ryang, -Ju-Sam²³, fifteen of the thirty-nine pastors ordained up until 1924 had previously been bible sellers. According to the official minutes of Ham Kyong Presbytery²⁴, the members decided to stipulate as an additional condition for recommendation of prospective candidates to their theological seminary that applicants should have been active as bible vendors. Lay persons also attempted to spread the Gospel. For example, the records of Ju-An Presbyterian Church, in the city of In-Cheon, show that over a year, one member brought over one thousand and twenty six people to the church²⁵.

21. CHoi Jeong Man, Mission and Aboriginalization of Theology Education (Pu Bit Ministry vol 106, Seoul, 1991) p.54

22. Ibid. p.50 - 51.

23. Ibid. p.52

24. Ibid.

25. Na Kyeom il, The Collection for Jesus festival (Ju An Presbyterian church. Seoul. 1990) p.49

2.1.4. Activities of Woman Assistants for Helping Ministers

The Korean church has a special ministry system which has not been found in other countries, namely women assistants are involved in ministry.

2.1.4.1. Women Evangelists (Jeon Do Sa)

There are no women pastors in the Korean church. However recently some Korean Presbyterian churches have allowed the ordination of women ministers.²⁶

Instead of ordained women pastors the Korean Church took full - time women assistant ministers for ministry. They are called Jeondosa which means "woman evangelist". Korean churches also have male Jeondosa who are not ordained but are qualified preachers, and candidates for pastor and inter pastor. Female Jeondosa are not ordained pastors and are not given authority to attend session meetings. However they cover the whole ministry of the church and essentially perform the function of pastor. These female Jeondosa are particularly involved in dealing with women parishioners and also play an important role in keeping the church together. The main ministry of the female Jeondosa is home visiting which the male minister cannot do, especially on the occasions of childbirth and hospitalisation for women's diseases and counselling for specific women's problems.

26. Ki Jang Presbyterian Church of Korea has allowed the ordination of women ministers from 1983

2.1.4.2. Kwunsa(as the Function of the Woman Elder)

The position of Kwunsa is found only in Korea. The Korean church does not allow for women ordained elders but their position is similar to that of woman elders in other churches. The Kwunsa is not permitted to be ordained in the Korean church system. The Kwunsa is chosen from the congregation among those who are appreciated and practise good works. They must be faithful in all things, respectable in every way and prove themselves blameless(Timothy Chapter 3). They help the pastor and female Jeondosa. They support them by leading prayers meetings and home visiting and also contribute towards the growth of the church.

2.1.4.3. The Wife of the Pastor

The pastor's wife also cares for the whole ministry like her husband, the pastor. The congregation expects her to behave like a woman shaman who cares in every way for parishoners. The pastor's wife is usually not permitted by the congregation to get any other job. When the pastor's wife visits members and prays for them they think that her prayers are more effective than those of another person. She used to go in company with her husband the pastor for home visiting but this is no longer the case. (Nowadays other full-time assistant ministers accompany the senior minister)

Those three kinds of female assistants in the ministry have done well to help the minister. Their work has contributed a great

deal towards the Korean church growth and they are leaders or originators who encourage the church members to participate in Bible study, prayer movements and other services in the work of the church.

2.1.5. Spiritual Revival and Bible Class

Another element of church growth is that of Bible-class and spiritual revival meetings. Ezra's revival movement and King Josiah and Nehemiah's movements are recorded in the Bible. The Korean Church, however, has held special Bible-class meetings many times over the course of its history. By holding spiritual revival meetings several times a year, the Korean Church "revives" or awakens the faith of its members, as the accelerator increases the flow of fuel to the engine. The special "Bible-classes" of the great revival period of the 1910's were particularly effective. Rev. W.N. Blair asserted²⁷ that, "above all things bible-study meeting was a cause of fast growth and revival in the early Korean Church". The words "amazing growth" were used to describe the phenomenal expansion of the Korean Christian Church at the 1910 Edinburgh Mission Congress²⁸. The Presbyterian Church revival was fuelled during this period by the practice of conducting prolonged bible class workshops, continuing for anything from a week to a month, for entire

27. Roy C. Shearer, Church Growth in Korea (The Christian Literature Society, Seoul. 1966) p.60

28. Choi Jung Hyon, Korean church and Shamanism (Seong Kwang, Seoul, 1993)

congregations. These meetings, which centred strictly on the Bible, were an important forum for the consolidation of knowledge and affirmation of faith. At the end of the Lee Dynasty, there was no longer a unifying force within the Korean consciousness.²⁹ This left a vacuum which Christianity could fill and the Bible was given to people with a fundamental respect for books. The study of the scriptures in the assemblies already described was a vital factor in determining the specific character of Korean Christianity.

Nevius³⁰ mission policy at that time also stressed the importance of bible study.³¹ The emergence of Korean Church leaders occurred during this phase, and many of the best Biblical scholars and theologians from third world mission fields were Korean³². These leaders sustained the effort of earlier missionaries and added impetus to the spread of the gospel, which is why Biblical orthodoxy is the frame and substance of Korean Christianity. The flourishing of Bible class assemblies represents a significant contribution to the growth of the Korean Christian Church. Like the spiritual revival meetings from 1904-1907, they centralised worship around the word of God, and the

29. Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., p.126

30. John Nevius was a missionary who worked in China in the 1880s.

31. McGavran, Donald, A., op cit., p.337

32. Choi Jeong Man, op cit., p.50

broad movement of spiritual revival was rooted in those assemblies which advanced from study of the Bible to spiritual experience. After the Korean War spiritual revival meetings became the main element of church growth, connecting with the Pentecostal Holy Spirit Movement in the 1960's to dramatically increase the popularity of Christianity among the Korean people, who were previously Shamanistic.

There were many large revival mass meetings in Korea in the 1970's and 80's. Billy Graham's evangelical meeting in 1973, the 1974 Explo, the huge national evangelical meeting of 1977 in which 1.7 million people came together at one time and in one place, and the great world evangelical meeting in 1988.

A council of revivalist pastors has been organised with the task of ensuring the continued growth of the revival movement.

2.1.6. The Nevius mission policy

Most missionaries agree that the Nevius mission policy, one of several mission policies in Korea³³, has featured strongly in the growth of the Korean Church. Prof, Choi, Jong-Man³⁴, in particular, asserts that the aspects of the Nevius policy

33. Seo Jeong Woon, The Growth of early Korean Christian church and Faith of missionaries (Pul Bit, Vol. 39, Seoul, Korea, 1984) p.76

34. Choi Jeong Man. Op. Cit. Mission and aboriginalization of Theology Education p.50

regarding the "self-government" or independence of the missionaries was highly constructive in church growth. M.C. Fennick³⁵ claimed that a major factor in the rapid growth of the Korean Protestant church was the aboriginalization of theological education and the fact that from the beginning the respective ministries were instructed in the principles of self government and self propagation.

2.2. Social and Religious Causes

2.2.1. The role of leadership in Korean Glasnost

The modern western civilizations of the nineteenth century were recognised as being progressive, and were highly respected by the Korean people. In China also, the Jesuit missionaries of the Catholic church used their scientific knowledge to approach Chinese scholars and gain credibility for their beliefs³⁶. Koreans saw the church as the best way of achieving the "new civilization" that they desired. Some converted to Christianity purely for this reason. Not only was the Church the introducer and agent of social change it also founded schools for the teaching of the "new sciences", namely I-Hwa, Bae-Jae, Kyong-Shin, Sung-Sil, O-San and Yeon-Se.³⁷ Many students who graduated

35. Ibid. p.53

36. Kang Chun O. Death, Religious Tradition and the world after death (Pul Bit vol. 104, Seoul, 1991) p.119

37. Kim Jeong Hak, Lee Hyon Hue, The History of Korea (Dong Hwa Press, Seoul, 1974)

from these Christian schools became Christians.

Dr Allen³⁸, a medical doctor played an especially important role in creating a favourable impression of early Christian mission work on the Korean government. Dr Allen treated the wounds of Min Young IK, a Korean minister of state who was injured in a political coup d'etat, and the Korean government subsequently appointed Dr Allen court physician in 1884.³⁹ Most of the Korean nobility at that time disliked and mistrusted Christianity, so the gospel was accepted in the North-West province of Korea which was inhabited largely by middle-class people, without a large constituency of conservative nobility. This province became the primary centre from which Christianity was spread.⁴⁰

During the 'Glasnost' period Korean Christianity led Korean society from the forefront. People saw Christianity as being both advanced and patriotic. Christianity had made a good impression. In the "3-1 Independent Movement", sixteen of the thirty-three national representative leaders were Christians.

Christians were in the forefront of the sciences, the arts and politics and Christianity attracted increasing numbers.

38. Son Byong Ho, The History of Presbyterian Church (Dept. of Education of P.C.K. Seoul. 1980) p.396

39. Shearer, Roy, E., op cit., p.43

40. Ibid, pp.178-188

Christianity played a leading role in advancing Korean society not only politically, but also in the realms of medicine, education, art and literature. It was instrumental in changing old traditions and social customs e.g. clothing, weddings, funerals and generally contributed to progress and enlightenment.

In the earlier period of the twentieth century Korean people went to church to be modernised (Westernised) and regarded themselves as the new elite. The church founded many schools and distributed much Christian literature. In turn this promoted the growth of the church. To the date of Professor Ryudongsik 85% of the whole Korean population had been exposed to Christianity in some form.⁴¹

2.2.2. Powerlessness of Other Religions

The reason for Christianity's rapid spread to the popular class in early mission history, was the true powerlessness of other religions. Because Buddhism had been suppressed by the Chosun Kingdom and driven to the mountain areas, and given that Confucianism was held to be the religion of the nobility, neither religion was actively followed by the greater population.⁴² The Dong Hak (currently known as Chondo-Kyo) religion appeared at

41. Yoo Dong Sik, Korean Religions and Christianity (Dae Han Christianity Books, Seoul, 1979)

42. Min Kyong Bae, The Church History of Korean Christianity (Korean Christianity Press, Seoul, 1982) p.229

this stage, but when their armed uprising failed, the hopes of common people vanished. Christianity was seen as a new hope and received fresh attention. People began to open their spiritual eyes. Christianity has many points in common with Korean folk mythology. These will be discussed in Chapter Six phrase C. Since their origins the Korean people have possessed a strong religious mentality. On this basis, they have understood and accepted Christianity as a beneficial religion. Christianity was quickly accepted and spread in the north-western provinces, where many of the middle classes lived.

The following example demonstrates the powerlessness of other religions and comparative strength of Christianity.⁴³ A Shaman was approached by a group of women to chase demons away from one of their number who was pregnant, and wanted to guarantee the safety of the foetus. Finding his powers unequal to the task, the Shaman advised her to approach the Methodist minister from a neighbouring village, assuring the woman that the Christian pastor would be able to invoke protection for her baby.

A Christian woman evangelist had the power to defeat the strength of the Shamans, which held many people captive in bondage and terror.

The loss of power by the other religions led to an increased

43. Ibid, p.76ff

interest in new religions.

2.2.3. Disruption of Denominations

Normally, the disruption of denominations has a negative function within the missionary field. In Korea, however, disruption performed a positive function, in that it increased membership and intensified the activities of the missions.

Biblical faith issued in dogmatic fundamentalism and conservative faith. On the other hand, after independence and the Korean war, liberalist theology was introduced to Korea. Also Shintoism became a problem with which Christianity was compelled to contend, and the tension between these three disparate religious trends resulted in the disruption of denominations. However, each church tried to extend its own sphere of influence in order to maintain its own orthodoxy, and various ministers joined forces fervently with larger sympathetic groups under the bitter experience of denominational disruption. For example, after the disruption of the Hab Thong Presbyterian Church into three denominations, the greater Presbyterian church planted 1340 congregations during the 1980's while the main Hab Thong Presbyterian Church planted about 400 new congregations in the same period⁴⁴.

44. Kim Hong IK, The sources of Ministry 1993, Korean Presbyterian Church Press. Seoul. 1993, p.24-25

3. EFFECTS OF CHURCH GROWTH

The Korean church became a church which because of the exceptional growth arising from the conditions described gained status as an important wing of the world mission. The numerical growth of a church often results in considerable problems, but there are other additional dimensions in which a church can grow. When a church grows, manpower and mission resources increase, which enable the church to evangelise more effectively. Today, the Korean church has grown through a number of elements already mentioned and with the help of the Holy Spirit, as illustrated in the following:

within 100 years, 25% of the entire Korean population, including the majority of the middle class have become Christian. In Seoul and its environs, 55% of the population is Christian; 23 of the fifty biggest churches in the world are in Korea⁴⁵; The Korean church has the biggest church building and the biggest theological seminary in the world; the Korean Christian Church held the biggest mass gospel meeting, attended by over 2 000 000 people⁴⁶, in history and 3 democratically elected state presidents⁴⁷ out of 6 since independence have been practising Christians.

45. Lee Jeong IK, Op. Cit. p.40

46. The mass meeting was named the mass revival meeting for world evangelisation and was held in Yeo Eui Do in Seoul.

47. They are the following: Lee Seung Man, Yun Bo Seon and Kim Young Sam.

The Korean church approximately doubled in size every decade. In 1912, when the first Presbyterian General Assembly was organized. There were some sixty-nine Korean pastors, and seventy-seven foreign Missionaries, with 2054 congregations in existence. In all, there were 127728 church members. The growth of the Church is evident from the following statistical table:

1912	127 728 (approx.)
1945	300 000 (approx.)
1955	600 000 (approx.)
1965	1200 000 (approx.)
1975	2400 000 (approx.)
1985	9500 000 (approx. increase x 4)
1992	12 500 000 (approx.)

Rev Lee Jae Beom⁴⁸ estimated that there are 45 000 congregations in Korea. At present (i.e. end of 1992), the Korean Church has 2 412 missionaries serving in various parts of the world.⁴⁹

The Korean church grew amazingly in the short one hundred years of missionary activity. During this period, 25% of the Korean population (ten million) were converted to Christianity. This is a unique phenomenon in mission history. It is also remarkable

48. Kim Tae Bok, Pastoral Campaign (The Pastoral Monthly vol. 199. Seoul. 1993) p.47

49. Han Jeong Kuk, Mission through evangelism, Mission world, vol. 17. Seoul. 1993, p.20

that the Korean people themselves established a church, and that a Korean translation of the Bible was already in existence before the arrival of missionaries. At the end of the nineteenth century, the religious, social and political conditions in Korea were favourable for the introduction of the Christian Gospel. Thereafter, faith was strengthened by Japanese oppression and communist persecution. This led to the development of intense religious fervour, which manifested itself in the power of the church. The Presbyterian Church was particularly alive in promoting church growth. Despite the internal pangs which caused denominational divisions, Korea progressed from being a country which received the Gospel to being one which disseminates the Gospel. In this, the Korean church can be regarded as a salutary example of church growth. (see figure 5)

Figure 5

Year	Members	Ministers	Members per minister	
'53	518,689	5,556	93	
'57	1,022,074	4,214	243	
'58	1,054,454	4,420	239	
'61	607,668	19,586	31	
'63	716,747	20,097	36	"
'64	795,508	16,397	49	"
'66	886,113	19,653	45	"
'68	3,177,811	13,952	228	"
'71	3,192,621	13,982	228	
'74	3,720,000	18,281	203	
'75	4,019,313	19,066	211	
'77	5,001,491	23,526	213	
'80	7,180,627	31,740	226	
'82	7,637,010	33,853	226	"
'84	7,568,630	32,919	230	"
'87	6,489,282	48,334	134	
'88	6,878,544	34,890	197	"
'90	11,888,374	58,288	204	"
'91	12,652,313	67,008	189	
'92	15,463,301	84,552	183	

CHAPTER SIX THE ROLE OF SHAMANISM IN KOREAN CHURCH GROWTH

Through Shamanism God prepared the Korean people to accept Christianity easily before the actual arrival of Christianity in Korea.

In the early period of missionary work of the Korean Protestant church, Western missionaries already indicated that shamanism could have a significant influence on Korean church growth.

This chapter show the role of shamanism in Korean church growth.

1. COMPARISON OF SHAMANISM AND CHRISTIANITY

In this phase, I shall examine the practise of Shamanism in the Korean church: how it is expressed, applied and adapted.

1.1. Perceptions(dogma)

1.1.1. Perceptions of God

Because Shamanism is not monotheistic it is able to accept and absorb the principles of many other religions. Although it is polytheistic, Shamanism nonetheless retains the concept of an Almighty Godhead. In Korean Shamanism "Haneunim," "Hanulnim,"

"Hananim" and "Ok Hwang Sang Je" were names used to refer to this "Highest God," the Creator of the World. The word "Hanulnim" means wide (Han) and fence (Ul). Hanulnim is a God who rules over the wide cosmos, so the shaman believed in the real existence of God.¹ Shamanism maintained that while this Godhead was invisible, he had nonetheless taken on human form on occasion² -- a concept which is central to the Christian faith.

Within the pantheon of Shamanism, gods were believed to be either good or evil.³ All of human life was believed to depend upon the benevolence of the Almighty Godhead.⁴ Korean Protestant Christianity adopted the name "Hananim," the Most High God of the Shamanistic pantheon, when referring to the God of Christianity. For Koreans, the name already carried the desired connotations.⁵

When the Christian gospel was introduced to non-believers in Korea some evangelists presented the Christian God as the greatest God to those who had the shamanistic belief. In the Korean religious background the highest god is known as the God who blesses people in contrast with the gods who make trouble

¹. Christianity Encyclopedia (Ki dok Kyo Moon Sa, Seoul, 1983) p. 966

². Kim Tae Gon, The Study of Korean Shamanism (Jib Moon Dang, Seoul, 1981) p.139

³. The World Dictionary of Philosophy (Education Press, Seoul, 1980) p.534

⁴. Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.287

⁵. Palmer, S.J., Korea and Christianity: The Problems of Identification with tradition (Holly Corporation, Seoul, 1967) p.8

like sickness and other calamities. In the case of Job from the Old Testament, the Christian God is shown as a God who brings blessings to the people and not one who brings disaster.

Benevolent spirits belonging to the lower strata of the pantheon were equated with the angels of Christianity. In the same way, evil spirits or "gods" were equated with demons. The "Punishing God" of Shamanism could be understood as the Christian "God of Justice." The Shamanistic belief that all things were controlled by the Will of God can be likened to the Christian belief in the Absolute Supremacy of God.

1.1.2. Perception of Creation

In Shamanism and Confucianism, Korean people are taught that human character is conceived and formed by the divine spirit, while the corporeal body emanates from the earth. These notions, to me, appear to be similar to the christian creation theory which perceives man as created physically from the dust, but in the image and likeness of God.

1.2.3. The Perception of a Supernatural World and Salvation

The idea of faith as a requirement for salvation and entry into the afterlife was not part of Shamanistic lore. The supernatural world was seen as an extension of the present world and all were believed to pass into it as a matter of course. A young man, or woman, who died before marrying would be betrothed by his parents

to a deceased member of the opposite sex, thereby ensuring the married status of both in the afterlife. Korean Shamanism did not have a developed concept of "sin" or "morality" but tended rather to be "material" belief.⁶ In this sense it differs strongly from Christianity which has at its centre the idea of future salvation. Shamanists believe that only the souls of the innocent are able to abide in the afterlife; others are reborn in the form of different species. While Christianity shares this concept of the afterlife, it does not accept the idea of transmigrationism. Nonetheless, it is a popular belief that human life is begun and ended by the power of God.⁷ A person who dies is said to have returned home, or to have moved to another world. The Shamanistic perception of Paradise is similar to that of Christianity with its image of heavenly garden and eternal life, into which the souls of the dead are received by "cha sa" (messengers) or angels.

1.1.4. The Perception of Human Nature

Within the Puriat province of Siberia, traditional belief holds that the human being contains three essential components, namely: the Body ("oyeye"); the lower grade Soul ("Amin"); and the Spirit ("sunyesun"). The "Amin" is seen as being related to death and the "Sunyesun" as being related to sleep. During sleep the

6. Clark Allen C., Religions of Old Korea (The Christian Literature Society of Korea, Seoul, 1961) p.217

7. Kim Tae Gon., op cit., p.287

"Sunyesun" is believed to depart from the body.⁸ Shamanism does not have a clear concept of creation. In Shamanistic pictures, God was depicted in the form of a human, but Shamanism does not have the idea that the human being is the (perfect) image of God. It should be noted, however, that gods, when appearing in dreams, adopt the appearance of the human form.⁹ The "Chang Se Ka" (Creation Song) of the Shamanist explained in detail the origins of humanity. Within the song, the origins of humanity are explained in terms of "Evolution" as opposed to "Creation." Shamanism maintains that following death the material body decays and releases the soul, which in turn is transformed and united with "Guishin" (spirits) in eternity. According to the Christian Bible, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). A biblical example of trichotomy is found in I Thessalonians 1:23, "May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, the parents, even though they have died, continue to exist as spirits. This belief can be regarded as the origin of the practice of ancestor worship. Christian Scripture, on the other hand, advocates the respect of living parents ("Honour your father and mother," Exodus 20:12) but does not advocate the "worship of deceased parents". The Christian trichotomy could

8. Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., Korean church and shamanism, p. 33

9. Ibid.

be understood by Koreans by virtue of the trichotomies similarly present in Shamanism.¹⁰ Furthermore, the idea of man himself being unable to achieve anything without spiritual assistance -- being present in Shamanistic ideology -- assisted greatly in promoting acceptance of the Christian doctrine of faith.

1.1.5. The Perception of Blessing

The Shamanistic perception of "blessings" differs significantly from that of Christianity in that it stresses the material as opposed to the spiritual aspects of the world. In other words, in seeking a blessing, a Shamanist seeks material sufficiency and the furthering of his community's and his own self-interest, as opposed to the "Will of God," stressed in Christian ideology.¹¹ If we analyse the Korean word for "blessing" we see that it is composed of four separate glyphs combined into one phrase(복). Respectively, the four glyphs represent "(衣)clothing"; "(一)roof/house"; "(口)mouth/food"; and "(田)farm". We can hereby deduce the mainly physical connotations of the word "blessings" in the Shamanistic interpretation and can understand the role of the shaman as primarily a preventer of physical misfortune when Korean people pray to receive blessings. Notwithstanding Christian references to material blessings, the primary "blessing" of the Christian faith remains, nonetheless,

10. Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., p.33

11. Park Jong Ku, "Korean Church and Shamanism" in What do you think of Korean Church (Pastoral New Books, Vol.19, Seoul, 1989) p.133

the realisation of the Kingdom of God. Throughout the Old Testament examples of this interpretation can be found; for example Numbers 6:24-26: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace." In the Gospels of the New Testament, the "blessings" of this world are portrayed as leading to the Glory of God; for example, Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Despite these apparent differences, the Korean Christian church has managed to accept, to a degree, the Shamanistic view of "blessings" and, in assimilating this view, has attracted more adherents. The various kinds of "special collections" common in Korean church life stem from concepts that have their roots in a Shamanistic interpretation of "blessings."¹²

1.1.6. Perception of Healing

Ancient oriental scholars held the belief that disease arose from disproportions within the body. In keeping with this belief acupuncture and finger pressure therapy were developed as means of treatment, along with various Chinese medicines aimed at restoring the patient's energy.¹³ Very little was known of the bacilli or viruses which are now seen to be the cause of much disease. Consequently, when a patient could not be successfully

12. Ibid., p.131

13. Kim Hyon Je, The Drug Nature and Effect of Chinese Medicine (Ministry and Theology, Vol.44, Tyrannus Book Co., Seoul, 1993) pp.254-256

treated through the aforementioned procedures, evil spirits were suspected of being the cause of the ailment. In such cases, a shaman would be contracted to perform a "gut" rite, in the hopes that through prayer and the appropriate ritual such evil spirits might be driven away. Shamans were recognised as possessing the ability to heal that which could not be healed by science and during the Chosun Dynasty were attached to medical centres, known as "Hwal In Seo."¹⁴ There are biblical records of Jesus driving off devils. Jesus, however, did not maintain that the diseases of the body arose from the presence of evil spirits. He cured disease through his abilities. The Bible advocates the use of prayer in healing but stresses that such prayer should be used in conjunction with medicine (see James 5:14 and Mark 5:13). Among modern day Korean Christians there are those who believe that the laying on of hands, loud scolding, and even assault are means by which disease can be driven out. Pastor Kim, Ki-Dong,¹⁵ in particular, maintains the belief that all disease has the presence of evil as its cause. Accordingly, his methods of treatment are centred around the idea of driving this evil out of the patient. These beliefs are essentially Shamanistic in nature, as are actual means of treatment.

1.1.7. The Perception of Leadership

14. Lee Nung Hwa, op cit., The searching of Cho Seon Shamanism. p. 85

15. Pastor Kim Ki Dong belongs to Korean Christian Baptist Church. However, most of Korean churches feel that he is a heresay pastor.

Within the community a shaman had three distinct functions: priest, doctor, and prophet.¹⁶ He supervised the performing of all ceremonies necessary to the healing of village life. Given that he was believed to be the recipient of a divine message, the shaman was treated with much trepidation within the community. The shaman was seen as controlling the fortunes of the community, good and bad, and people lived and died according to his teaching. Shamans believed to have a greater spiritual power than other shamans were treated preferentially. This resulted in a form of spiritual competitiveness among shamans in the field. Towards the end of the Chosun Dynasty, shamans could be found serving in the army¹⁷ as advisors or chaplains of sorts. Given the importance of agriculture to Korea, nationwide ceremonies were held, with the participation of many shamans, with the intention of bringing rain. Furthermore, on occasion the king would request that his shamans hold prayer meetings to protect the country from invading enemies.¹⁸ Public officials and members of the royal family are known to have commissioned "gut" ceremonies aimed at hampering political opponents.¹⁹ Given their importance within the community, shamans would occasionally find themselves in jeopardy. The last king of the Baek Je Dynasty, Euja, is believed to have sent for a shaman in order to gain an interpretation of what he thought was a lucky dream. When the

16. Dictionary of Theology (The Korea Society for Reformed Faith and Action, Kimpo, Korea, 979) p.257

17. Lee Nung Hwa, op cit., p. 28

18. Ibid., p.111

19. Ibid., pp.150-159

shaman interpreted the dream as signifying the fall of the nation, Euja had him executed.²⁰ Later generations came to regard this shaman as particularly prophetic.²¹ Within the modern community the role of pastor is similar to that of the shaman. Christ himself being priest, healer and prophet is interpreted by Koreans as having Shamanistic attributes and is more easily accepted as a consequence. Nonetheless, Korean Christians do not always recognise certain important differences between Christianity and Shamanism and require the guidance of a pastor in many matters. Pastors perform a leadership function similar to that of the shaman and, like shamans, are given preference according to their spiritual abilities (healing, prophecy, etc). Pastors who are perceived to be particularly powerful attract increasingly large congregations. In an attempt to secure spiritual and material blessings many church members seek to establish a connection with their pastor. Pastors are invited to meals and presented with gifts or money by members of their congregations, and to a large extent are treated as though they were shamans.²² Nonetheless, Christian doctrine stipulates that a minister or pastor is not, himself, the origin of blessings but rather a shepherd guiding his children to the way of faith in God.

20. Ibid., p. 28

21. Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., pp.21-22

22. Bae Sang Gil, "Talk to Pastoral Visitation" in What do you think of Korean Church (Pastoral New Books, Vol.19, Seoul, 1989) p.315

1.1.8. Perception of Spirits and Death

Korean people believe that human life is conceived and terminated by God's power. This idea emanates from the concept of the highest god in Shamanism, who is regarded as omnipotent. For example, when somebody dies, people perceive him/her as returning to the supernatural world and being reunited with the highest god.

According to Shamanistic ideology, humanity is eternal, with the human soul returning to its original position after death. This concept of reversion to the origins of existence is the basic Shamanist viewpoint.²³ Shamanists believe that the soul is fundamental to the life of the body.²⁴ Though certain differentiations do exist, this concept is nonetheless similar to that of Christianity. According to scriptures, "The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). The scholar, Lee Ik²⁵ of the Lee Dynasty, recognised that there are spirits in all things. Further to this, the scholar, Kim Shi Seub,²⁶ asserted that while a spirit occupied the form of its living body (whether plant or animal), that spirit could be referred to in terms of that form and by that form's name; once the outward form died, however, the spirit

23. Kim Tae Gon, op cit., The study of Korean Shamanism, p. 305

24. Ibid., p. 300

25. Shin Tae Ung. op cit., The spirits' perception of Korean traditional faith, p. 71

26. Ibid., p. 75

could no longer be associated with that form in name or otherwise and would be referred to simply as "spirit." Furthermore, all things brought into being in the universe, upon their death, reverted to existing as malevolent spirits. Shamanism maintains that the Almighty Godhead Himself dwells in a realm well removed from that occupied by humanity and that he does not actively intervene in human affairs. Rather, management of the realm of humans is delegated to the gods of the lower spiritual strata.²⁷ These, in turn, are assisted in their responsibilities by hosts of lesser spirits. A common Korean belief was that the souls of the dead became ghosts or spirits, which either went to heaven or remained in the human world. The spirits of deceased parents were said to be malevolent. This belief can be regarded as the origin of the practice of ancestor worship.

Christianity, on the other hand, does not subscribe to the principles of ancestor worship, and maintains furthermore that the spirits of the living cannot communicate with those of the dead (Luke 16:19-31). Early Korean Catholics were martyred for holding to their belief that the worshipping of ancestors was evil (e.g. the martyrdom of Yun, Ji-Chung and Kwon, Sang-Ryon during the religious persecutions of 1791).²⁸ When attempting to cure a patient, a shaman will seek to drive away those evil

27. Yoo Dong Sik, op cit., Korean religions and Christianity, p. 18

28. Kang Chun O, Korean church and ancestor worship (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol. 39, Seoul, 1984) p. 19

spirits believed to be the cause of ailment. From this practice we are able to see the strength of the Shamanistic belief in the spirits of the dead. This belief is at variance with Christian doctrine. As a result of their concepts of a Shamanistic pantheon, Koreans are easily able to understand the Christian perception of a "devil," whom they equate with "Doggebi" (One of Ghosts). "Doggebi" are believed to be active at night given their purported fear of light. To the Korean Christian understanding, Jesus, being associated with light, is seen as the great repulser of evil.

1.1.9. Perception of Gifts

According to popular belief, Korean shamans are actually possessed by spirits, and have the "gifts" associated with evil spirits in particular. These gifts include the ability to heal, to drive away evil spirits, to speak as oracle, and the gifts of prophecy and spiritually inspired composition, all when in a state of Shamanistic ecstasy.²⁹ Those shamans who are inspired in the writing of spiritual epistles are referred to as "Myong Du" as are the epistles themselves. 'Myong Du' shamans have the gift of divining which is very important for them. As with all the previously mentioned "gifts" the writing of epistles has been correlated by Korean Christians with the "gifts" of the Christian Holy Spirit. The concept of the "Myong Du" was later developed

29. The World Dictionary of Philosophy, op cit., p.535, and Lee Nung Hwa, The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism (Dong Moon Seon, Seoul, 1991) pp.137-139 and pp.143-147.

into the idea of "Bu-Jeok" in which the epistle itself became a charm preventing bad luck.³⁰

1.2. A COMPARISON OF FORMS AND ELEMENT OF WORSHIP

1.2.1. Aspects of Worship (Sort of Worship)

Shamanistic ritual took the form of either "home-rites" or village rites. The term "gut" refers in general to all such rites but may be used to refer, in particular, to the larger forms of ritual. Smaller-scale rites can be referred to, specifically, as "bison" or "binyom." These tend to be less formal.³¹ In the case of a "bison," a single shaman is usually sufficient for the ceremony, while a true "gut" invariably requires the participation of many shamans. Musicians ("Jebi") are also involved in the larger "gut," orchestrating the singing and dancing required by the ritual.³² Similarly, the larger "gut" can be referred to as "Seon Gut" (meaning "Standing Gut") and the lesser gut, or "bison," referred to as "Anjeun Gut" (meaning "sitting gut").³³

The Korean Christian church has divided its services into two categories, based upon the influences of the corresponding division in Shamanistic ritual. The "major service" of Sunday

30. Religion and Society Institute of Korea, Dictionary of Korean Religion and Culture (Jib Moon Dang, Seoul, 1991) pp.243-325

31. Religions and Society Institute of Korea, op cit., p.109

32. Kim Tae Gon, op cit., pp.46-51

33. Ibid, p.347

morning may be likened to the large Shamanistic "gut," while the Sunday evening and Wednesday services correspond with the "bison" or "binyom." The "great service" of Sunday morning involves the participation of many pastors and elders, musicians, a choir and entails much standing prayer and singing of hymns. The lesser services, or "praise services," involve a smaller congregation, a smaller choir and the full ensemble of priests and elders is not present. The congregation remains seated throughout most of the service. A strong trend among the various congregations is for one third of the membership to attend the Sunday evening service and one tenth to attend the Wednesday service. Traditionally, most Christian formal services take place in the church itself -- Sunday services, wedding ceremonies, funerals and Holy Communion.

According to Shamanist traditions, however, only those ceremonies pertaining to the community as a whole were enacted in the shrine or public meeting place. Lesser ceremonies took place in the home of the family or person to whom they applied. The Korean Christian church has adopted this tradition to a degree, and many small-scale ceremonies are conducted at homes or in the workplace. Shamanistic rites can be further divided according to their purpose. I will draw comparisons in order to show how the Korean church has assimilated almost all the various forms of "gut." Because Western Christianity does not consider home visitation and prayer meeting part of its formal service, it can

be deduced that its significance in Korean Christianity arises from the importance of earlier Shamanistic ritual. Korean Christians do not differentiate between home visitation, special prayer meetings, etc., and the major Sunday services -- all the various aspects of Christian worship are referred to simply as "service."³⁴ See Figure 1 for a comparison of services in Shamanism³⁵ and Christianity.

1.2.2. Order of Worship

The various Shamanist ceremonies differ from one another in content, form, and the order of rituals. Most of them, however, have three phases in common. These are: the "calling" of God; the "welcoming" of God; and the "hearing" of the will of God.³⁶ The Christian service bears similarities, although in this case the "calling" and "welcoming" stages are collectively referred to as the "approach of service," and are followed by an additional phase, called the "response," not present in the Shamanistic ceremony. For example, here follows the order of "gut" used by Mrs Mun Deok Sun, indicative of the ritual procedures of the Mudang (shaman) in Seoul, Korea. Her "gut" follows twelve stages.³⁷

34. Jeong Il Ung, The Study of Worship Forms of Korean Church (Ministry and Theology, Vol.44, Tyrannus Book Co., Seoul, 1993) p.46

35. Dictionary of Korean Religion and Culture, op cit., pp.108-110

36. Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.51

37. Choi Gil Seong, op cit., pp.52. 152

Figure 1

SHAMANISM	KOREAN CHRISTIANITY
<p>A. Mustin Je (shaman's rite)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nae rim Gut (Kand shin Je) 2. Kkot maji Gut (Chuk shin Je) 3. Ha jik Gut 	<p>A. Pastor's Ordination</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ordination service 2. Pastoral training for getting spiritual power 3. Retirement ceremony
<p>B. Gaje (rites for home)</p> <p>- lifetime -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sam shin Gut (Chil seong Je) 2. Gyong Gut (Pu dak go ri) 3. Yeo tam 4. Seong ju Gut 5. Jae su Gut 6. Kwang in Gut 7. Young jang ji ghi 8. Non bu Gut (Aek me ghi) 9. An tek Gut <p>- after death -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Det mo ri 11. Jib ga sim 12. Mo ghi Gut (Jin o ghi) 	<p>B. Home-visiting service (ministry)</p> <p>- lifetime -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Service for congratulating 2. Healing service 3. Engagement ceremony, wedding ceremony 4. House-moving ceremony, construction ceremony 5. Regular home-visiting ministry 6. Service for driving away evil 7. Consolatory prayer visit for patients 8. New Year ceremony 9. Regular annual home visiting <p>- after death -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Funeral service 11. Ceremony for cleaning the mourner's house 12. Ceremony for sending the spirit of the dead man to heaven (Catholic ceremony)
<p>C. Dong Je (rites for community)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go sa 2. Pung eo Je 3. Dang Gut 	<p>C. Rites for community</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thanksgiving service 2. Thanksgiving for fishing 3. Prayer meeting for village protection
<p>D. The others</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yong shin Gut 2. Yo Wang ma ji 3. Dwait ma ji Gut 	<p>D. The others</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sailing ceremony 2. Prayer meeting for ship or worship for sea god 3. Closing ceremony

Figure 2

ACT 1: GOD IS INVITED	
1. Bu Jeong Gori	Purification of the place of ritual and the way of God's approach
2. Ga Mang Gori	The invitation of God
ACT 2: ENTERTAINMENT AND ORACLE	
3. Mal Myong Gori	In separate seances, each god is individually called upon in turn. The gods are entertained with song and dance. The message or words of each god are heard.
4. San Sang Gori	
5. Byol Sang Gori	
6. Sae Gam Gori	
7. Je Seok Gori	
8. Seong Ju Gori	
9. Seong Ju Gori	
10. Gun Ung Gori	
11. Chang Bu Gori	
ACT 3: CLOSING CEREMONY	
12. Dwait Jeon Gori ³⁴	The gods return to their respective realms.

Gori means "stage."

Korean Christians who were familiar with the order of these Shamanistic rites could easily understand the order of the Christian church worship.³⁸ Christian doctrine advocates the preparation and cleansing of the mind through repentance prior to church service. Christian service involves the singing of hymns, the hearing of the preaching of God's word, the taking up of a collection, and, at the close of the service, the pronouncement of the benediction. In all these respects, the Christian Order of Worship bears a strong resemblance to that of Shamanist ritual. The main difference between the two lies in the fact that the Shamanist ceremony involves the worship of more than one God.

38. Kim So Yeong, *Worship and Life*(Hyon Doe Shin Seo 62, Dae Han Christianity Books, Seoul, 1974) pp.62-63

In Christianity there are procedures for spiritual cleansing and for preparation for worship before stating the main order of the service like the ritual of Bujeongkuri of shamanism. In Korean Christianity this stage includes a hymn of preparation and silent prayer. In the formal Christian service this ritual begins with the singing of the first hymn. In the Korean Christian service there is the procedure of silent prayer before the beginning of the formal service and before the silent prayer the congregation sings some hymn or gospel song until the start of the formal service. The songs are called songs of preparation and for that someone from the congregation says loudly, "Let us sing the song of preparation."

The opening prayer and the representative prayer: in the original Christian service the saints or worshippers follow God but in Korean Christianity the leaders of the prayer invite the Lords of Trinity into that place in the words of their Christian prayer as in the shamanistic prayer.

There are no intercessionary prayers in shamanism. Shamanistic people ask in their prayer for the security of themselves and their family only without concern for others but there are intercessionary prayers of ministers in Christianity.

In shamanistic ritual the shamans offer entertainment to the

invited gods by singing and dancing in Bonkuri.³⁹ In Christianity, congregations please God by praise and worship including choir singing.

When the singing and dancing take place at the high point of the service the shaman receives the divine message which he imparts to the congregation. In Christianity the minister preaches God's words through the sermon prepared beforehand and based on the Bible. When the shaman receives the oracle he must be in ecstasy. So the shaman must engage in singing and dancing in order to enter the state of ecstasy when he can receive the divine message. Korean Christianity seems to have been influenced by the shamanistic practice of singing and dancing because congregational or choral singing always takes place between the scripture reading and preaching.

Some so-called pastors and powerful evangelists stand at the pulpit without any preparation for the sermon. They think that the paper on which the sermon is written is not spiritual and interferes with the contacting of the Holy Spirit so they attend the service and during the singing of the hymns and in the prayer before scripture reading, some inspiration of scripture enters their minds. Then, following the inspiration they open the Bible and start preaching. Thus preaching is regarded as being conducted by the Holy Spirit. This point is similar to the practice of the shaman who receives the divine message in only

39. Bonkuri means a main ceremony.

one way, through the spirits.

After every dance performance or on the completion of the whole GUT the people offer money in order to propitiate their god and to make the ritual more effective. Christianity also offers some money as an expression of thanks to the Lord in the service.

Originally the offering order of the church service meant thanks for protection during the week and also for giving us daily food.

In the last step of the GUT which is Dwit Jeon Gori all the gods are invited and then return. In the last order of the Christian service the congregation leaves the church after the dismissal and receiving the benediction.

Therefore the order of shamanistic ritual is easily accommodated into the Korean Christian service.

1.2.3. Garments of Worship

The priests of the present-day Catholics, Greek Orthodox and the African church, among others, all have their distinctive ritual garments. The same is true of Korean shamans. The Korean shaman conducts rituals in special shamanistic garments which are appropriate to one who is mediating with God. It is supposed that this is connected with the robes of the priests in the Old Testament who approached God on behalf of humanity.

The same is true of Korean shamans. The attire of the Korean

shaman consists of the following: the traditional shaman's hat made of white paper, called "gokkal." Female shamans wear "kueja" (the traditional woman's jacket and skirt) and "hwal ot" (the traditional woman's coat). Garments are white, black, and yellow cloth with stripes of many colours and each shaman will have in his possession a bell-stick (with seven bells), a fan, a sword, a spear, a myong du (circular brass dish), and a fodder-chop. Often, Korean shamans will dress themselves in the traditional attire of a Korean knight when seeking to drive away malevolent spirits. This practice is somewhat reminiscent of the Christian idea of the "full armour of God" (Ephesians 6:11). Similar to the shaman's use of a ceremonial bell is the use of bells by Catholic priests and Korean church pastors to announce the beginning of the service.

1.2.4. The Use of Musical Instruments in Ritual

The performing of a traditional "gut" involves the accompaniment of many musical instruments,⁴⁰ including the "jing" (gong), "jang go" (double-headed drum), and the "jegeum." The "jebi," or "shaman's assistant in charge of music," coordinates the use of the "buk" (drum), "piri" (recorder), "haegeum" (Korean fiddle) and "hojeok" (clarinet). The use of musical instruments in the "gut" is believed to be important to the success of the ceremony. The Christian Scriptures make frequent mention of the similar use of musical instruments in religious ceremonies and many

40. Choi Gil Seong, op cit., p.80

instruments are used in the services of present-day Full Gospel Churches, in particular.

1.2.5. The Object and Content of Worship

The object of Shamanistic ritual is the avoidance of misfortune and the invoking of blessings in order to ensure the permanent continuation of human life through the various stages of being.⁴¹ Almost all the religions of the world have this objective in common.⁴² Shamanism is the ritualistic conduit through which the petitions of the community are presented before God. Prichard⁴³ emphasises the importance of concentrating on actual religious practice and beliefs rather than on theoretical and abstract origins. Shamanistic ideology holds that human misfortune arises from disobedience to God's will, and advocates obedience as an assurance of good fortune.⁴⁴ The bible preaches salvation as a consequence of the acceptance of the Gospel, and unity with Christ. (John 1:12, Ephesians 1:10) Shamanism maintains the belief that sin arises from the desire to possess,⁴⁵ and in this respect is similar to Christian doctrine. According to Scripture, human unhappiness arose from the "original sin" of Eve's desire for the "knowledge of good and evil." "Then, after desire has conceived,

41. Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.163

42. Johannes G.Vos. trans. Han Seong Su, A Christian Introduction to Religions of the World (Korea Logos Research Institute, Seoul, 1988) p.9

43. E.E.Evans-Pritchard, Theory of Primitive Religion (Charendon Press, Oxford, 1965) p.22ff

44. Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.193

45. Ibid., p.171

it gives birth to sin, and sin when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 1:15). In Shamanistic ceremonies, the expiation of sin frequently requires the sacrificing of an animal, and the "spilling" of its blood.⁴⁶ This practice has facilitated the understanding by Koreans of the sacrificial rites of the Old Testament. 1 Chronicles 16:29: "Bring an offering and come before Him; worship the Lord in the splendour of His holiness." The shaman is responsible for the provision of a portion of the food required by the "gut," and for the purified water used in "bison" (or lesser "gut"). Water is a basic requirement of Shamanistic ritual, signifying purification and life,⁴⁷ and this has facilitated an understanding of the concept of baptism and the idea of the "living water" of Jesus Christ. The Korean people, who sought from their shaman's blessings health and the expulsion of evil, sought the same rewards from Christianity. Within the Korean Christian mind set, the hearing of the sermon carries the same importance within the "Order of Service" as the "hearing of the oracle" carried within the "gut." Most shamanist ceremonies take place at night, largely due to the popular belief that God is better able to listen to prayer at night.⁴⁸ This belief has been carried through into the prayer meetings of the Korean church, most of which take place at night.⁴⁹ The Shamanistic concept of "ancestor worship" should

46. Ibid, pp.416-417

47. Ibid., pp.414-415

48. Lee Nung Hwa, op cit., The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism, p.17

49. Most Korean Churches have all night prayer meetings.

not be thought of as synonymous with the Christian tenet of respect for parents. The main objective of "ancestor worship" in a Shamanistic sense is the obtaining of blessings and the averting of misfortune, not respect for respect's sake.⁵⁰

The desires of the people are satisfied and their problems are solved through the shaman's ritual GUT. Also Korean Christians satisfy their desires and find release from their troubles through Christian worship and prayer. Sometimes if the church members have problems they invite ministers and get encouragement by the home visiting service or sometimes they themselves go to the mountains where they pray and sing until their troubles disappear.

1.2.6. Objects of Worship

Shamanism is a polytheistic belief. The various spirits and gods of the Shamanistic pantheon are believed to inhabit many different bodies and many different places. All of these divine entities are worshipped -- the "Most-High God," the Water-god, the Earth-god, the Hero, the Ancestors and the Gods of "house", "tree" and "stone," etc. Christianity, on the other hand, forbids the worship of anything but the one Almighty God, believing that the worship of created things is idolatrous (Jeremiah 10:8).

50. Kim Myong Hyok, Historical Understanding of Ancestor Worship (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol.30, Seoul, 1984) p.39

In Christianity God is the object of prayer and worship, not the object of control.

1.3. COMPARISON OF PRIEST

1.3.1. Interpretations of the Shaman's Title

The characteristics of the shaman may be deduced from literal interpretations of the name. An interpretation of the Manchu word for shaman gives the meaning: "excited man," "stirring man," or "shaking man."⁵¹ A literal Chinese translation renders shaman as "jumping god."⁵² In fact, the Chinese glyph (巫) for the word can be interpreted as "one who dances between heaven and earth." The pronunciation of the Manchurian word for shaman -- "salman" -- is similar to our pronunciation of shaman.⁵³ "Samu" was the term used within the Kokuryu Dynasty for shaman.⁵⁴ The history books, Koryosa and Chosun Wang Jo Sillok, render shaman as "Mukyok."⁵⁵ The expression "Mu" is used to refer to a female shaman, while "Kyok" refers to a male shaman.⁵⁶ Woman shamans were also specifically referred to as "mansin" (meaning "many gods") and male shamans as "baksu." According to Kim Tae Gon⁵⁷ the work "baksu" is a misrepresentation of the name "boksa"

51. You Dong Sik, op cit., Korean religions and Christianity, p.16

52. Ibid.

53. Lee Nung Hwa, op cit., The searching of Cho Seon Shamanism, p. 248

54. Ibid.

55. Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p. 11

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

meaning "fortune teller." Within the same province another expression for the male shaman was "kwang dae," meaning "clown" -- a reference to the shaman's musicians present during the "gut."

Contemporary terms for Korean shamans are "mudang," "dan gol," "sim bang" and "myong du," but the most popular of these is "mudang." These are honorary titles.⁵⁸ The term pastor, translated into the Korean language, is rendered as "moksa" meaning shepherd and master. The word "sa" meaning "master" is also found in expressions meaning shaman. Of further interest is the word "simbang." Among the people of Jeju Island, Korea, home-visitation by the shaman of the area is a frequent and important occurrence. Among these people, the expression used when referring to a shaman is "simbang." Within the Korean Christian church the term used to describe the concept of "home-visitation" by pastors is also "sim bang." The word is pronounced identically in both contexts and carries the same root meaning, namely "to visit."

1.3.2. Sin Byong Che Heom

Shamans are generally divided into two categories: "kang sin mu dang" and "se seub mu dang," the first meaning "shaman who has received God," and the second meaning "shaman who was educated." "kang sin mu dang" who performed their functions by way of

58. Ibid., p.365

spiritual power, or divine inspiration, spread throughout middle and northern Korea. "Se seub mu dang," those who perform their function by way of inherited priestly authority, spread throughout southern Korea and Jeju Island.⁵⁹ In the process of becoming a shaman "kang sin mu dang" experience a series of spiritually transmitted afflictions, including mental disorders, assorted bodily pains and any of a number of other ailments that may confine the shaman to the sick-bed.⁶⁰ These afflictions are termed "sin byong che heom" and are believed to be incurable by any means other than the complete acceptance of God by the subject. It is believed to be an entirely religious phenomenon, defying scientific explanation, and is considered the shaman's rite of passage into the world of God. Certain South American shamans are said to experience a phenomenon in which they die and are revived.⁶¹ In Christianity, when one accepts the Gospel, one is said to experience the operation of the Holy Spirit, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit one is said to be "born again." This is the process by which the believer is relieved of his old nature and is created anew. Occasionally in the midst of the "born again" experience the initiate will display extraordinary gifts -- speaking in strange dialects, etc.⁶² In many respects, therefore, the "sin byong che heom" of the shaman and the "born again" experience of the Christian are quite similar. The

59. Choi Gil Seong, op cit., pp.154-155

60. Kim Tae Gon, op cit., p.77

61. Ibid., p. 231

62. See I Corinthians, 12:4-11

phenomenon, in both cases, is seen as an indication of true acceptance and belief. The "sin byong che heom" of Korean Shamanism can be regarded as a universal phenomenon reflective of man's interaction with God regardless of racial differences.

1.3.3. Seong Mu Gwa Jeong

The term "seong mu gwa jeong" refers to the course through which the student shaman becomes an independent shaman. This process differs between kang shim mu dang and se seub mu dang. "Se seub mu dang" learn Shamanistic dance, song and incantation through continual parental instruction. The novice will accompany the parents in the rituals performed by the latter and will diligently practise the various aspects of those rituals under close parental supervision.⁶³ "Kang shin mu dang" is not voluntary or by designation but rather is put into motion when the subject, displaying signs of "shin byong" ("shaman's disease") is interpreted by a consulting shaman as being a potential shaman. From this moment the novice will commence the "seong mu kwa jeong." This process involves the performing of the "ne rim gut" by a prominent shaman, in which the novice is presented before God and receives the spiritual power associated with a shaman. By this ceremony, the novice becomes accepted as a shaman.⁶⁴ For the ceremony the student will wear the "kwe ja" or shaman's garb, and will carry a bell in the left hand and a

63. Kim Tae Gon, op cit., pp.273-278

64. Ibid.

fan in the right. Music and dance accompany the ceremony. During the performance of the "gut" the striking of the bell sends a vibration through the body of the subject, summoning the spirit to enter.⁶⁵ The student will call out the names of the approaching spirits and speak "in oracle." At this stage, witnesses of the ritual will present the subject with money and request the telling of their fortunes. This the subject does and is hereby recognised by the witnesses as being legitimate. Nonetheless, "new" shamans do not yet perform "gut" as the techniques of these rituals have first to be learned from an established shaman. The novice will accompany his or her instructor in the "gut sang cha rim" (the preparation of food for the ritual taste) and will be taught the various songs and dances associated with Shamanistic ritual.⁶⁶ As instruction progresses the student will assume more and more responsibility for the performance of the various ceremonies. The "seog mu kwa jeong" of Shamanism can be compared to the taking of Holy Orders.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

SHAMAN	PASTOR
Sin Byong Che Heom (receiving god)	Calling (receiving Holy Spirit)
Gong Su (oracle)	Tongue of Dialect
Ecstasy	Divineness
Seeing through fortune	Prophecy

The course of study of the shaman is undertaken individually while that of the Christian pastor takes place in a school, alongside many students. Nonetheless, there are Biblical examples of the personal guidance of spiritual leaders. Joshua received instruction under Moses, and Samuel studied privately under Eli before receiving the Spirit of God in the sanctuary. Following the death of Eli, Samuel assumed the religious leadership of the Israelites. The cases of Joshua and Samuel bear similarity to the process of seog mu kwua jeong of Shamanism. Within the Shamanistic phenomenon the subject is seen to have no personal choice in becoming a shaman. Similarly, Judeo-Christian prophets are believed to have been unable to refuse their spiritual callings.

1.3.4. Roles

Those who have the power of spiritual gifts and can perform shamanistic ritual can be shamans. Christian pastors also have

a special authority to perform rituals like baptism, benediction and celebrating Holy Communion. The shaman has been until now the leader of popular religion, culture and life. Pastors are the leaders of the local culture and lifestyle of the parishioners especially in rural churches. The shamans and Christian pastors are expected as the authority of spiritual empowering to fulfil the religious requirements of the people in common society. The shaman performs the ritual alone and the Christian pastor also usually conducts the service by himself.

1.4. ORGANISATION OF RELIGION

1.4.1. Self-Organisation

In order to maintain their lineage and ensure the linear transfer of their special abilities shamans only married one another.⁶⁷ Shamanistic abilities were transferred from generation to generation by way of the "na rim gut" (or "rite for receiving God").⁶⁸ During the ancient period there were no religious training schools in Korea. New shamans arose through lineage, were formally ordained as shamans and were then instructed in Shamanist techniques by their predecessors. Female shamans referred to their disciples as "shin ddal," meaning "daughter of God".

Over the course of their studies, disciples were required to pass

67. Ibid., p.70

68. Ibid., p.62

through five levels, or grades, of instruction. These were "shin nae," "seong bang," "ha shin chung," "jung shin chung," and "sang shing chung." The highest shamans of the "snag shin chung" category were the "do hwang su."⁶⁹ This system bears a similarity to the Christian hierarchy of evangelist, assistant pastor, pastor, bishop, and archbishop. Shamans, particularly those in Honan Province, maintained clearly defined "holy precincts" within which to perform their respective ministries.⁷⁰ The concept of "holy precincts" bears a similarity to the system of ministry districts adhered to by the Korean church, instituted at an early stage by the first Korean Christian missionaries. Shamans managed their own organisation through marriage, lineage, hierarchy and "dan gol pan 'je do" (the system of distinct shaman districts).

1.4.2. Management of Followers

"Mudang" (shamans) manage their followers in various ways. Each shaman has a group of adherents (su yang ja) whom he or she will visit in order to perform the religious rites of the household.⁷¹ This cultivation of loyalty and discipline amongst followers is similarly conducted in the Christian Church. The extensiveness of the practice amongst shamans, of establishing "clientele," was particularly evident in Ho Nam Province, where the "dan gol pan" system emerged. In this system each shaman had his or her

69. Ibid., p.131

70. Ibid., p.148

71. Ibid., p.70

specific customer region and determined his or her specific role within that territory. Shamans did not encroach on each other's territory, nor were followers of one shaman permitted to consult another shaman from a different district.⁷² Shamans performed all the Shamanist rites of their communities and imparted their teachings to specific groups of devotees. Residents of a given region would provide the local shaman with rice and barley in spring and autumn, and would reward the shaman for the performance of rites with food and money. The annual fee paid to the shaman was called "do bu."⁷³ When shamans went to collect "do bu" from their followers they would customarily give, in exchange, Korean cookies (ddeok) and sweets (yeot) as a gesture of gratitude for the support received. This practice whereby the shaman is provided for by his or her followers is reminiscent of the Jewish and Christian tithing systems, and continues to influence the traditions of the Korean Christian church.⁷⁴

There is a specific period of extensive home-visiting by Christian ministers during spring and autumn. Pastors are frequently given generous gifts during these visits, and seldom go to the members of their congregations empty-handed. Similar customs prevail in Eastern Africa, where the "dan gol" shaman is the recipient of gifts and support, and were also evident in the

72. Ibid., p.112ff

73. Ibid.

74. Han Wan Sang, What Problems are in Korean Church? (Dae Han Christian Press, Seoul, 1982) p.198

Christian church during the first century.⁷⁵

"Dan gol pan" could be sold or lent, in the same way that in the modern Korean Christian church buildings and congregations are sometimes traded amongst ministers.

These days, the "dan gol pan" system of "transmitted" Shamanism is occasionally ignored by those seeking a more spiritual form of Shamanism. In today's Korean church, Christians flock towards charismatic pastors and ministers will seek to retain their congregation by portraying themselves as such.

75. J.G.Frazer, The Golden Bough (MacMillan, London, 1957) pp.199-200

2. SHAMANISM IN THE KOREAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In this phase, I shall examine the practice of Shamanism in the Korean church: how it is expressed, applied and adapted.

The colours of Shamanism are ubiquitous in the Korean Christian church. God provided Korean people, through Shamanism, with a religious basis which facilitated a ready acceptance of Christianity. The perception of the cosmos, God, humanity, spirits and priests in Shamanism is very similar to the Christian view, as I have shown, and therefore Christianity, rather than being viewed as a foreign imposition, seemed to Koreans to be a natural extension of an existing faith. No radical reversal of beliefs was necessary.

At the end of 1910 the famous Korean writer, Lee Kwang Soo, criticised the Korean church.⁷⁶ In his criticism he indicated that American missionaries effectively disseminated the Gospel by using the spiritual elements of shamanism but the Christianity they introduced was not an ethical religion and that shamanism was adapted by the Korean church from the beginning. But his argument is not reasonable as he misunderstands Christianity. However we can admit that he was partly right in his view of the influence of the shape of the shamanistic religion on the Korean

76. Kim In Su, *The Brief Church History of Korea in Education and Church*, Vol.96-7 (The Presbyterian Theological Seminary Press, Seoul, 1996) pp.66-67

Christian church.

When St. Paul visited Athens, he saw a monument with the inscription "to the Unknown God" before the court of Areopagus(Acts 17:16-31). There he proclaimed the Unknown God to be God Almighty, Jehovah.

Similarly, in Korea, Shamanism was known as God's religion. Lee Nung Hwa saw that Shamanism was in some measure a religion of God.⁷⁷ God's religion, namely the Christianity which believes in Jehovah as the Almighty God, was introduced to Koreans who worshipped God, but whose understanding of God was vague and imprecise. Christianity offered them a clearer definition and a deeper understanding of the being whom they worshipped.⁷⁸

Since ancient times, Korean people have been predisposed to embrace imported new religions, but their commitment is selective, rather than complete, since, despite appropriating features of other religions, they still retain their Shamanistic character. Thus, although nominally accepting Christianity, Koreans remain Shamanistic in their habits, lives and thought. In the blending of the two religions, the Shamanistic elements remain virtually undistilled.

77. Lee Nung Hwa, The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism(Dong Moon Seon, Seoul, 1991) p.12

78. S.J.Palmer, Korea and Christianity: The Problems of Identification with Tradition(Holly Corporation, Seoul, 1967) p.8

Korean people like to eat bibim bab, a dish in which white rice, shredded meat, chilli sauce, bean sauce, varied greens, herbs, vinegar, sesame oil and seasonings are mixed with fried egg and eaten. This disposition of Koreans towards mixing diverse elements which is well expressed in the nation's food culture, is also evident in Korean religious practice.⁷⁹ Emergent religions in Korea invariably incorporate aspects of the major religions, producing new syntheses, for example, Tong il kyo; Won kyo (zero religion); Won bul kyo; Dong bang kyo; Yong hwa kyo; etc.⁸⁰

In this phrase, the influence of Shamanism in the Korean church is to be discussed in greater detail.

2.1. THE CAPACITY OF KOREAN SHAMANISM TO ASSIMILATE OTHER RELIGION

When a minister of the gospel attempts to convert Koreans to Christianity, he often encounters a positive response, with the prospective convert expressing the belief that acceptance of Christianity may bring him/her peace of mind, or make him/her 'a better person'. Reassurance and moral improvement are thus seen

79. Choi Jung Hyon, Korean church and Shamanism (Seong Kwang Press, Seoul, 1993) p.77

80. Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, trans. Rhee Ho Youl, Understanding the Cults (The Christian Wisdom Publishers, Seoul, 1987) pp.21-22; Kim Dong Wan, Exodus from Circle (Young Dong Press, Seoul, 1989) pp.291-296; Tak Myong Hwan, Tong Il Kyo is not Christianity (Kuk Jong Press, Seoul, 1983) p.4; Religion and Society Institute of Korea, Dictionary of Korean Religion and Culture (Jib Moon Dang, Seoul, 1991) pp.219, 491-492, 494.

as desirable goals, because there are inbuilt elements of Shamanism. Since faith in an afterlife is central to Shamanism, imported religions are able to tap into a reservoir of existing beliefs, hopes and aspirations in order to render their doctrines congenial to the convert.⁸¹ The temperament of the Korean people is conducive to the mixing of religions. All religions are held to be similar in that they share as a common goal the making of a better world. This attitude arises from a Shamanistic background in which the blending of religions is accommodated. Shamanism can be easily blended with other religions by virtue of the fact that it has no advanced religious doctrine of its own. While Shamanism contains the concept of a heavenly God, its faith is in polydemonism. Consequently, it is able to accommodate any other religion. Shamanistic faith involves a desire for blessing in the secular world.

Shamanism adds materialistic elements to its spiritual functions and secularizes those aspects of imported religion which are susceptible to incorporation in the realistic mentality of people regarding civil life. The imported religion did not overcome these factors, and did not reject Shamanistic influence. A typical example is that of Kyong Kyo, an early branch of Christianity imported to Korea in the fourth century. There is an organic body, based on 'civil religion' and 'pungryudo'⁸² in

81. Kim Tae Gon, op cit., The Study of Korean Shamanism, p.329

82. Pungryudo is a mind which has enough strength in reserve at difficulties and is an idea which has artistic creativity.

the Silla Dynasty (second to seventh century). This organic body was called 'Hwarang Do' and became the fulcrum of the army of Silla.

The 'Hwarang Do' was a youth organisation stemming from the national elite. Their title, 'Hwarang', has Shamanistic origins as does their manner of dress. Their code for daily life and their education system arose from Buddhism, while their sacrificial functions were derived from portions of Taoism. These Shamanistic Korean religious systems integrate the structures of imported religions, consciously or unconsciously modifying or transforming them into the processes of Shamanistic thought.⁸³

Taoism was the first imported religion to permeate Korea⁸⁴, but because it lacked its own specific forms and organisation it lost all autonomy and was rapidly absorbed by Shamanism⁸⁵. Since Taoism, like Shamanism, was partly secularly orientated with an emphasis on the aversion of misfortune and the desire for material blessing, it was fundamentally compatible with existing Shamanistic thought.

During the Lee Dynasty, there was an official government

83. Choi Jung Hyon, Korean Church and Shamanism (Seong Kwang, Seoul, 1993) p.58

84. Yoo Dong Sik, op cit., p.27

85. Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., p.52

Department of Taoism, the So Hyok Seo⁸⁶, and Shamans officiated as priests in Taoist religious rites. According to bibliographic evidence, Buddhism was imported during the 4th, to Koguryo Dynasty in 372 A.D.; to Baek Je in 384 A.D.; to Silla in 450 A.D.⁸⁷ In the early phases of the diffusion of Buddhism, the religion was ostracised by people as it conflicted with original, traditional beliefs. Buddhism was officially recognised by the Silla dynasty during the reign of King Beob Heung 14th in 524 A.D.⁸⁸ after the religious martyrdom of Lee Cha Don. Thereafter, Buddhism mingled with Shamanistic faith and gradually took root.

Original Buddhism was an ethical religion, but when transmitted to China, under Chinese influence it was modified into Dae Seung Buddhism⁸⁹. This form of Buddhism elevated the Buddha to an object of worship and taught spiritual transcendence as the aim of worship. Hence, the philosophical framework of the religion was eroded as it inclined more towards the pursuit of happiness and blessing, which was the foundation of traditional religion, facilitating a comfortable melding of the two⁹⁰. Religion was ostracized by people as it conflicted with original, traditional beliefs.

86. Lee, Hong Sik, Encyclopedia of Korean History(Korea Press, Seoul, 1982), p.754

87. Ibid., pp.630-631.

88. Ibid

89. The World Dictionary of Philosophy(Education Press, Seoul, 1980), p.203

90. Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., pp.42-43

Although the Buddhism which was initially a philosophical and ethical system did not disappear entirely from Korea, and to some extent preserved its own character, it deteriorated into ceremonial Buddhism. This is evident in the occurrence of Chil Seong Kak (shrine to the God of the stars) and San Sin Kak (shrine to the mountain God), which are of Shamanist origin, in Buddhist temple. Some 50% of Buddhist temples house such shrines⁹¹.

Confucianism, which was essentially an ideology for national government developed at Confucius (Kung Zhe in Chinese), had an ethical and rationalist bias which was antipathetic to the emotional, irrational character of Shamanism. The intelligentsia studied the Seon Ri Hak philosophy, a discipline of Confucianism, and political leaders applied the principles of Confucian ideology in government during the Lee Dynasty. However, the general population was more concerned with the religious rites of Confucianism and developed its principles into forms of worship rather than studying it as a political ideology or philosophy⁹².

There is common ground between Shamanism and Confucianism in the conception of God, spirits and rites. Confucianism incorporates philosophical principles concerning Chung (civil allegiance) and Hyo (filial loyalty). These two concepts were expressed in hero-

91. Yoo Dong Sik, History and Structure of Korean Shamanism (University of Yeon Sei, Seoul, 1975)

92. Choi Jung Hyon, op., pp.46-47

worship, ancestor worship, the worship of the earth god, and the worship of God. These practices became formalised as the motives of the population in worship inclined towards the quest for blessing and the preservation of ancestral spirits, and mingled with 'house god' Shamanism. The reason why Shamanism and Confucianism co-existed is that they were complementary in many respects. The two systems co-existed because Confucianism functioned as the religion of the intelligentsia, of political leaders and of men, while Shamanism was embraced as a populist religion by the proletariat and by women.

Because imported religions grew in the soil of the national consciousness deeply informed by Shamanistic thought, the spread of imported religion is dependent on its affinities with Shamanism, which is always orientated towards repelling misfortune and seeking blessing. Concealed within the body of any imported religion which has flourished in Korea is the substance of Shamanism. Successful imported religions are hybrid, revealing aspects of orthodoxy alongside aspects of Shamanism. The Shamanistic capacity was also applied to Christianity. The harmony between Shamanism and Christianity has been discussed in this chapter phase C.

2.2. EMOTIONAL ELEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS KOREANS

Koreans are the emotional people, the people of Han⁹³. Koreans applied this appellation to themselves⁹⁴. The Korean name for the country is Dae Han Min Guk, which means "The Republic of Great Korea". Since earliest times, Korean people have been called 'Han'.

Ko Cho Seon, the first state of Korea, was called Han in the book *Si Kyong*⁹⁵, an anthology of poetry from ancient China. At the end of the nineteenth century, the King Ko Jong of the Lee Dynasty changed the name of the state from Cho Seon to Dae Han. The word 'Han' has very emotional connotations. It is the same as Ghan, which was the title of King during the Silla Dynasty, e.g. Geoseo Ghan, and Marib Ghan, and also is the same as Khan, which is the title of the king in Mongolia, e.g. Genghis Khan. The word has means big, wide and high, g.e. han chang(peak time); han bada(wide sea). Han also means heaven, e.g. han ui(high heaven), and right(correct) or centre, e.g. han ka wui(full moon or the 'centre' of the month according to the lunar calendar); han ka un de(the exact centre). Lastly, han means both one and the whole, e.g. han sa ram(a man and many men); han jong kyo(one religion and all religions). In the last examples, we can observe the paradox in the word: it simultaneously signifies one entity,

93. Yoo Dong Sik, *Korean Religions and Christianity*(Dae Han Christianity Books, Seoul, 1979) p.218

94. The appellation 'Han' was called from the Three Kingdoms period(Fourth Century A.D., Lee Hong Sik, *Encyclopedia of Korean History*, Korea Press, Seoul, 1982) p.1641

95. Yoo Dong Sik, op cit., *Korean Religions and Christianity*, p.215

and a larger whole. This is the cornerstone of the Korean character--its acceptance and inclusiveness⁹⁶.

Han Ul Nim, the name of the God of the Korean people, means the Highest God, One God and God of the Whole. This God became the God of Shamanism, i.e. the God of Shamanism can be the One God who encompasses all gods. Therefore, Shamanists worship simultaneously one God and many gods. For this reason, Shamanism could incorporate and subsume Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Christianity.

Korean people were called the people of Han⁹⁷, which denotes a complex emotion including anger, revenge, sorrow and yearning. Here, we encounter a very interesting word which marries the two different meanings: han ma neon(한 많은 은). The word han ma neon has two meanings. The first is derived from the first set of concepts explained, i.e. very much or too much. The second is related to the idea of yearning, i.e. very powerful yearning. The Korean people have strong positive and negative yearnings. This emotion of yearning is born of Korean history. From early times, the Korean people encountered great difficulties, and the women in particular suffered and wept. Han(the cluster of feelings already described) is an emotion deeply embedded in the

96. *Ibid*, p.217

97. Kim Jeong Hak, The History of Formation of Korean Race(The Great History of Korean Culture, Vol.1, University of Korea, Seoul, 1964) p.411

Korean temperament.

The Korean folk song, 'Ari Rang', which is known throughout the world as representative of Korean folk music, contains and conveys the han of fruitless love. The song tells of a young girl who is deserted by her lover, and yearns for his return:

Ari rang ari rang ara rio
He passes over the Ari rang hill
The lover who leaves and abandons me
Will get a disease of the feet
Before he has travelled four kilometers⁹⁸

In Korean society, entertainment with strong overtones of pathos is very popular. Sad films, mournful music and tragic drama are highly appreciated because for Koreans the essence of enjoyment lies in sympathetic identification with the characters, themes and events portrayed. The power of entertainment to move the audience is a key criterion in evaluating its success⁹⁹.

This han emotion is manifested in three ways. Firstly, han is (ㅅ 7 | ggeun gi) suppressed or contained. The Korean people naturally repress the han. When confronted with suffering or injury, Korean people are inclined to suppress their pain rather

98. Department of Education, The Music Schoolbook for Middle School (National Schoolbook Press, Seoul, 1979) p.22

99. Yoo Dong Sik, op cit., p.217

than reacting angrily. It is interesting to note that the Korean national flower, the Mu kung Hwa (the Rose of Sharon)¹⁰⁰, blooms over a long period. The flower shares the character of han in that it is continuous and sustained, and provides a further metaphor for Korean life in that the bark is plagued by small insects, which can be likened to the hardships of human circumstance.

Korea does not have a history of aggression. Over a period of 5000 years, Korea has never attacked or invaded another country, but only defended itself. This han and ggeun ki are commonly sublimated in prayer. Prayer is the medium through which Korean people express han: this prayer is the objective correlative of the Korean people's emotion.

The function of the shaman was to communicate the han of the people to God through prayer, incantation and ritual¹⁰¹. Shamanist rites are often extremely lengthy, lasting through the night or extending over days. Korean people are known to engage in long periods of prayer. In all churches in Korea, there are Christians who hold long prayer vigils late into the night.

In this way, the emotional character, the han of Korean people, is expressed in the religious practice of prayer.

100. A scientific name: *Hibiscus syriacus*

101. Choi Gil Seong, *Shaman of Korea* (Yeol Hwa Dang, Seoul, 1985) pp.141-151

Secondly, the han is expressed in life and art, for example in singing, dancing and games. Religious song, dance and play are also components of the Shamanist gut. 'Chang' is a form of song which evolved to express sorrow. Korean people enjoy recreation and celebrate holidays with various kinds of lively play: loud singing, dancing and card playing are favourite festive activities. Modern young people vent their emotions in the uninhibited atmosphere of discos. Korean people vent their innermost selves in gut ritual play.

So, Korean Christians discharge their han in prayer, the singing of hymns and gospel dancing. After the release of emotionally charged Sunday services, Christians feel that a catharsis has been experienced and are satisfied that their worship has achieved its purpose.

The character for shaman(샤) means 'dancing shaman'. Korean people were known from early times as 'dancing people'¹⁰². Christian pastors are required to fill the role of the dancing shaman. Korean Christians feel that Shamanistic Christianity is more spiritual and closer to their psychic origins because of its emotional elements.

Thirdly, Korean people expressed their han through literature.

102. Kim Jeong Hak, Lee Hyon Huei, The History of Korea(Dong Hwa Press, Seoul, 1974) pp.28-32

Sad stories are the narrative norm in films and literature. The famous anonymous ancient novels, *Seong Chun Hyang* and *Sim Cheong Jeon*, depict tragic events and portray the abiding Korean Han.

The sadness of the Korean emotional character is expressed in prayers of contrition and repentance which are offered up with tears and in sorrow. It is clear that Korean people typically express their emotions passively, rather than through aggression or action.

2.3. CHARACTER OF THE KOREAN CHURCH

The rapidly-grown Korean church, nurtured by internal elements of Christianity and the external influence of circumstance, displays many characteristics which are identifiable with Shamanism.

2.3.1. The Korean church has an extremely individual character

The Korean church demonstrates great enthusiasm for the salvation of individual souls, but is less interested in social responsibility, or in justice in the community which contributes to the formation of the human personality¹⁰³.

Shamanism is a religion in which the believer prays to God

103. Lee Yo Han, *The Church Programme with No Purpose* (Mission World, Vol.18, Seoul, 1993) p.51

himself, or through the shaman, for personal blessing. He/she is unconcerned with the welfare of others, and therefore intercessory prayer is totally absent from Shamanism. This specific characteristic of Shamanism still determines the nature of belief for Korean Christians. The true meaning of the Gospel is not centred on the prosperity of the individual in this way. The parable of the Good Samaritan(Luke 10:30-37) teaches that salvation is not for the single individual, but that the Christian has a responsibility towards his neighbour. It is this emphasis on love and service which distinguishes the Christian Gospel from Shamanism in its self-centred approach. Of course, salvation involves an individual responsibility to God, but in Christianity, the purpose of God is accomplished and his kingdom established through the works of believers. The Church of Christ is not only a personal refuge, but exists as a body within society, and is therefore socially accountable¹⁰⁴.

The individualistic, self-centred faith of Shamanism¹⁰⁵ is manifested not only in the attitudes and practices of Christians, but also in the churches which tend towards separatism and idiosyncrasy rather than unity. Church members demonstrate a strong allegiance to their own congregations and exercise their Christianity within that specific context. Other congregations

104. Alvin J. Lindgren, Trans. Park Keun Won, Foundations for Purposeful Church Administration(The Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1977), pp.45-46

105. Lee Hun Ku, Korean Traditional Religion and Korean Church(Yeon Hab, Seoul, 1992) pp.135-137

are perceived in terms of rivalry, rather than fraternity, and in order to expand their own congregations, ministers and members 'poach' from others, believing that their power is thereby increased. The growth of particular congregations, rather than that of the church as a whole, is treated as paramount. This mentality is shared by both members and ministers.

Individualistic growth is one of the distinctive features of the Korean church. The acquisition of material assets and facilities for individual churches always takes precedence over undertaking other, more distant ecumenical enterprises. For example, the establishment of a church building, a parking lot, a mountain prayer retreat, a church cemetery are given priority over funding rural congregations or supporting missionary activity. This occurs even when the congregation itself is depleted: while church pews are empty, plans for new constructions are being prepared.

This tendency arises in part from the mission policies of Nevius, which included the principle of congregational self-sufficiency, whereby missionaries were not responsible for the training or support of ministers. Costs, including the salaries of ministers, were to be borne by individual congregations who were self-governing and financially self-sufficient.¹⁰⁶

106. Seo Jeong Woon, *The Growth of Early Korean Christian Church and Faith of Missionaries*(Pul Bit, vol.39, Seoul, 1984) p.76

However, the individualistic nature of Korean churches and their concern for self-preservation must largely be attributed to the fundamentals of Shamanism.¹⁰⁷

2.3.2. The passivity of the Korean church

In Shamanism, the individual is wholly dependent on God, and is passive in his life circumstances. The Korean church lays great stress on the salvation of the individual soul and the promise of eternal bliss. It is significant that the mystical dimensions of Christianity, such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual ecstasy of revival prayer meetings are important facets of Korean Christian belief and worship. Because of an inordinate preoccupation with the afterlife, there is an absence of social concern and an acceptance of the existing social parameters as natural or inevitable. This leads to an apathetic attitude towards social projects or the practice of faith as a Christian: service, charity and active commitment are lacking. For example, a housewife might visit a mountain retreat for some months in search of intense spiritual experience and a revival of faith, meanwhile neglecting the practical needs and welfare of her family.

The shamanistic emphasis on the powerlessness of humanity and omnipotence of God has had both positive and negative consequences for the Korean Christian church. On the one hand,

107. Lee Hun Ku, op cit., p.138.

it has encouraged passivity and social indifference; on the other, it has promoted a deep spirituality and an ideal of communion between the individual and God.

2.3.3. Formalistic character of Korean church

The formalistic character of the Korean church may be partially derived from the formalism and legalism of Confucianism during the 500 years of the Lee Dynasty¹⁰⁸, as well as from Shamanism.

Hereditary shamans who are trained in the arts and techniques of shamanism by their forebears may lack actual spiritual power: they acquire the skills to perform shamanist rites, but their activities are relatively meaningless, being merely an observance of form. Similarly, there are many Korean Christians who believe that their salvation is gained by adherence to the rituals and conventions of the church. Diligent attendance with appropriate participation in the order of service is mistaken for authentic religious commitment.

Korean Christians keep the Sabbath diligently, but having attended a Sunday service, typically feel that their responsibility to God has been discharged, and revert to their normal patterns¹⁰⁹. Having gone through the necessary motions,

108. Yoo Dong Sik, op cit., p.242

109. Kang Young Ahn, *The Christian Intellectual of these Days*(Light and Salt, vol.95, Tyrannus Books Co., Seoul, 1993) pp.52-53

they consider themselves free of further obligations. In Shamanism, the preparation of the gut food table and the performance of gut rites are intended to please the gods. The gut is therefore enacted with devotion and complete concentration. Here, the shaman is the main participant, with little involvement on the part of followers. Hence, shamanistic Christians often maintain a facade of belief, while inwardly lacking a substantial faith. Their identity as Christians is a mask which can be donned for appropriate occasions, but they are intrinsically unchanged. Shamanists are largely ignorant of the doctrines of the belief to which they subscribe. In the same way, Korean Presbyterians are largely ignorant of the Westminster Creed, Catechism and Presbyterian Constitution¹¹⁰

2.3.4. Conscientiousness of church

Conscientiousness played a role in church growth, and was particularly evident in the fields of Bible study and evangelism. The Gospel was enthusiastically spread and received, just as people had diligently attended to the songs and utterances of shamans. New converts loudly affirmed their faith just as patients healed by Shamanism happily proclaimed their good fortune. A Biblical example of this pleasure in a new-found hope occurs in the story of the Samaritan woman (John 4). The conscientiousness of early Korean Christians led to the

110. Son Byong Ho, The History of Presbyterian Church (Department of Education of Presbyterian Church of Korea, Seoul, 1980) pp.409-411

development of domestic and foreign missions as part of the task of the church in witnessing to God.

In the early phases of the Korean Christian church, new members were not admitted to congregations unless they were engaged in some form of evangelism¹¹¹. Churches ordered that prospective members should have a sound knowledge of the Bible before baptism, and children were required to memorise scripture from an early age¹¹². Shamans are required to study all the procedures of their rites and to memorise their songs, dances and incantations, etc. It was believed that if the shaman performed the gut conscientiously, the spirits would be summoned and bless the rite¹¹³. The zeal of early Korean Christians did indeed prove a powerful force, imparting a profound awareness of the Holy Spirit as an active presence in the personal lives of members and in the growth of the church as a body¹¹⁴.

2.3.5. The prayer-centred church

An important characteristic of the Korean church is its zeal in the area of prayer. Believers seek contact with God thorough prayer. Prayer is like a telephone which permits communication with God. Zealous prayer, loud prayer, early morning prayer and

111. Shin Nae Ri, What do you think about the Korean church?(Shin Mang Ae Press, Seoul, 1989) p.343

112. Ibid., p.342

113. Kim Tae Gon, The study of Korean Shamanism(Jib Moon Dang, Seoul, 1981) pp.274-278

114.. Lee Yo Han, op cit., p.52

the custom of mountain prayer all illustrate the prayer-centredness of the Korean church. Through prayer, people request the help of God, and feel empowered as Christians. This practice is associated with the belief that the prayer of the shaman is able to solve everything and that the shaman's power of mediation is a gift from God. The gut of Shamanism was performed with prayer from start to finish. The gut comprised twelve Go Ri(scenes). The Ta Ryeong(song) of each Go Ri is a prayer in song form. The small gut(Bi Nyom) is simply the prayer of the shaman. In early times in Korea, it was customary for women to pray concerning matters of significance in their lives, e.g. for the conception of male offspring, for the success of their husbands in civil service examinations, etc. This habit of prayer provided the matrix for prayer practices in the Korean Christian church.

2.3.6. Bible-centred Church

The Korean church received its faith from missionaries whose teaching was Bible-centred. This orientation of the early 'planting' church was adopted by the offspring church which aimed to promote Bible-centred living and the diligent study of scriptures. The role of Bible study in church revival has already been referred to in Chapter 5 B. Therefore, when confronting life crises, Korean Christians seek biblical guidance in their decisions¹¹⁵.

115. Shearer, Roy E., The History of Korean Church Growth(The Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1966) p.248

Because Koreans have, for centuries, regarded the shaman as an oracle interpreting the mind of God, they are predisposed to treat the word and will of God with reverence, obedience and humility. This respect for the Bible has led to the development of a church which interprets the Bible conservatively. The contemporary Korean church is more conservative than both western churches and the Japanese Christian church¹¹⁶.

2.3.7. Sacrificial Service within the Korean Church

Korean Christians differ from other peoples in their sacrificial service. This is evident from many examples. When building or cleaning a church, members sacrifice their time and labour, freely laying bricks, carrying timber and generally performing the tasks necessary for the satisfactory completion of the work in hand. The same applies to material and financial contributions. In Africa, early missionaries provided materials and labour for the establishment of churches. In contrast, from the outset in Korea, the local population drew on their own resources, tithed and made special contributions to construct and expand their own churches. The main impetus for Korean church growth came from this capacity for sacrificial service¹¹⁷.

Female church members take pleasure in gathering together for pastoral home visits and gladly share funding for refreshments

116. Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., p.134

117. Roy E. Shearer, op cit., pp.249-250

and transport for the minister. This activity derives from shamanistic practice, in which special portions of scarce foods and delicacies were reserved for the rites of home gut, ancestor worship, etc. The saving of these foods usually involved some sacrifice, particularly where resources were not abundant, but the importance of ritual was such that these customs were routinely observed by Korean people¹¹⁸.

This sacrificial mentality, generosity of spirit and desire to perform good deeds is expressed in the contemporary character of the Korean Christian church¹¹⁹.

118. Lee Hung Ku, op cit., pp.93-94

119. Ibid

2.4. EMERGENCE OF SHAMANISTIC COLOURS IN THE KORAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Behind the splendid growth of the Korean church lurk many elements of Shamanism. The first person to use the term 'Shamanism' in Korea was the missionary, Horace Grant Underwood from America¹²⁰. The reason why he was able to spread the Gospel effectively was that he studied Shamanism and was therefore able to understand the distinctions between Shamanism and Christianity. Because Shamanism has no dogma to conflict with Christianity, the style of faith adopted by the Korean church retains remnants of Shamanism.

2.4.1. Elements in Faith

Shamanism pervades the Korean style of faith in that it is fundamentally extemporaneous, self-centred and egoistic. We know that the Christian God does not necessarily respond immediately to prayer (Habakkuk 1:2). Shamanists believe that when the shaman summons the spirits, their prayers are instantly answered and miracles are promptly performed. Since for Christians their God is almighty, Korean Christians steeped in the traditions of Shamanism have great expectations that their prayers will be

120. Park Jong Ku, Korean Church and Shamanism (Pastoral New Books, vol.19, Seoul, 1989) p.141

immediately answered and their problems miraculously solved.

The Bible instructs the believer to search his heart and mind before praying to God(2 Chronicle 7:14), but the Korean Christian prays without premeditation or reserve, egoistically seeking personal benefit without concern for the needs of others. For example, a family travelling to the seaside on holiday will pray for fine weather alongside a village farmer who is earnestly petitioning for rain to irrigate his rice fields. Neither is concerned with the other's problems, or with the general welfare of the community¹²¹.

The altar is held sacred in the shaman's rites and the ritual for Dankun who is the founding father of the Korean nation. In modern Korean Christianity the Christian holds the altar sacred for example normally Christian revere the altar.

2.4.2. The Element of Prophecy in the Korean Christian Church

In Shamanism, when the shaman performs the gut, the spirits immediately descend to judge good and evil and to prophesy concerning the future. However, the prophecy of Christianity differs from the prophecy of fortune-tellers in that it does not reveal the personal destiny of individuals. Some Christians

121. Lee Hun Ku, op cit., p.108

believed to have the gift of prophecy provide forecasts to 'customers' regarding affairs of the heart, financial matters, etc. Because of this element of superstition, although no one knows when the Second Coming of Christ will occur(Matthew 24:36), many self-styled heroes of the last days have emerged during the short history of the Korean church. The mystique surrounding Jeong Do Ryong is representative of the mythologies connected with Christ's second advent. Moon Seon Myong, the founder of Tong Il Kyo(Moonism), is a self-styled god.

Some of the Korean Christians go to God's so-called powerful servants to ask about healing, the future prospects of business, success of university entrance examinations or other entrance examinations for higher education. These phenomena are similar to the prophetic elements of shamanism.

2.4.3. Elements of Ethics

Korean Christians are firm believers inside the church, but their daily lives seldom demonstrate a commitment to Christian ethics. Conflict amongst Christians is common, often involving swindling, fraud, etc. For example, the president of a Christian women's association borrowed money from its members and disappeared to another city, later joining a new church and parading as a devout Christian. The women whom she had defrauded were thoroughly

disillusioned and subsequently rejected Christianity¹²².

In Shamanism, the concept of sin is not foregrounded. The purpose of shamanist worship is to avert misfortune and attain a comfortable life; therefore personal morality is not determined or restricted by the religion. Hence, unethical conduct is not incompatible with Christian belief for those whose values are informed by a shamanistic world view¹²³.

The replies of Korean Christians to a questionnaire¹²⁴ reveal a dissatisfaction with the standards upheld within the church community. Two hundred and seventy-eight out of 613 respondents (i.e. 45%) complained that there were no sound role models amongst "mature" Christians from whom to learn proper Christian conduct. One hundred and forty-two respondents (23%) stated that Christians participated unscrupulously in unethical projects or activities.

Because of its relatively tolerant stance towards unethical conduct and the double standards practised by many nominal

122. Kim Tae Bok, Reform Starts from Sharing (The Pastoral Monthly, vol.203, Seoul, 1993) pp.42-43

123. Lee Hun Ku, op cit., pp.99-100

124. Ibid., pp.160-161

Christians, the church has grown prodigiously, since it is perceived as permissive and accommodating¹²⁵.

2.4.4. Aesthetic Elements

Shamanism is characterised by a highly developed aesthetic sensibility. Generally, religions are concerned with purity, piety, holiness, compassion and truth. This emphasis on the pursuit of the sublime means that such religions are practised in an atmosphere of reverence and tranquillity, rather than amidst bustle, splendour and brilliance¹²⁶.

Shamanism, however, is typified by gaudiness, boisterousness and excitement. The face of the shaman is elaborately and beautifully decorated. Her clothes are multi-coloured, usually brightly striped, and a different outfit is donned for each stage of the ritual. In Taoism, priests wear white or blue; Buddhist priests wear robes of grey or saffron; Confucians wear white; while Christian ministers and priests generally wear black, white or

125. Ibid., p.149

126. Lee, Elizabeth K., *The Koreans* (Korean Overseas Information Service, Seoul, 1989) p.69; Kim Tae Gon, op cit., pp. 46-47; Choi Gil Seong, op cit., p.15

grey¹²⁷.

In contrast, the shaman is vividly and elaborately attired. In one hand she carries a stick bearing seven rings, on the other a fan. At some stages of the ritual she plays musical instruments, sings and dances. Shamanism is a religion of performance in which the priest is the bright, animated focal point¹²⁸.

Representations of the shamanist God in shrines are also vividly coloured, with the ornamental character of representations of Hindu deities¹²⁹.

Colour is also carefully and symbolically utilised in other aspects of shamanistic worship. Incantations are printed on coloured cloth and paper, the shamanist altar is decorated with colourful cloth bearing inscriptions, and foods are harmoniously arranged according to colour on the shaman's gut table, eg red foods are placed to the right, etc., according to their symbolic significance¹³⁰.

127. The Committee for the Research of Clerical Garb and Stole (The Kidok Kbing Bo in Korea Newspaper, no.1956, Seoul, 1993) p.5

128. Kim Tae Gon, op cit., pp.72-73

129. Ibid., p.135

130. Ibid., pp.75-76

A strong aesthetic element is thus apparent in all areas of shamanist practice: music, dancing, fine art, make-up, apparel, cuisine, etc¹³¹.

Originally, the Protestant movement(eg. Calvin) was strongly opposed to the ornamentation and decoration of church buildings¹³². It rejected the iconography of the papists and established an ideal of simplicity and austerity in church design. Nowadays, the Korean Protestant church shows considerable enthusiasm for the beautification of houses of worship and the incorporation of wider aesthetic experience into worship. Floral art, stained glass windows and choir gowns are a focus of renewed interest. Floral art has become particularly important, and this is strongly reminiscent of the decoration of shamanist shrines.

One church in Seoul spends R 1800 per week on flowers for church decoration: the ornamentation of the pulpit and altar is considered more important than the practice of faith. The motivation for this kind of expenditure is surely rooted in shamanistic thought¹³³.

131. Choi Gil Seong, op cit., pp.69-80

132. Kim So Young, Renovation of Worship in Korean Church(The Pastoral Monthly, vol.204, Seoul, 1993) p.39

133. Lee Dong Huy, Structural Renovation of Church for Mission(The Pastoral Monthly, vol.203, Seoul, 1993) p.96

2.4.5. Elements of Music

The shaman herself plays music and sings during the gut. We are therefore justified in regarding Shamanism as a musical religion. Christianity also has musical elements, eg. the Psalms of the Old Testament. However, the modern Korean church has seen the emergence of percussion instruments as an accompaniment to praise. Here, too, the influence of Shamanism is apparent, since the instruments most favoured by shamans were drums, etc. Christian meetings conducted to percussion music strongly resemble the shamanist gut, in using rhythm to induce ecstasy.

The Korean Full Gospel Church is particularly prone to using music and rhythm to heighten emotional and religious experience.

2.4.6. Economic Elements (Mammonism)

Shamanists believe that their prayers are more effective if they provide a generous gut table. Also, the amount of money paid to the shaman is believed to affect the results of prayer: the shaman commands a fee supposedly required by the spirits, and the believer expects blessing in proportion to the amount of his offering. Thus, shamanists measure faith and its results in terms of economic principles¹³⁴.

134. Lee Hun Ku, op cit., p.35

Korean Christians enjoy attending enormous meetings, especially revival meetings. When fund-raising drives are held, special meetings are held over a period, culminating in a financial appeal. Contributions are publicly solicited, in auction fashion. Church members regard donations as an investment which will earn them spiritual and material profit or interest. Actually, God becomes an investment project for Christians with this mentality¹³⁵.

2.4.7. Social Elements

The shaman was the almighty arbitrator concerning personal problems, domestic conflicts, neighbourly disputes and social customs in her area¹³⁶.

Korean Christians expect their pastors to fulfil the same function in modern society. Church ministers have to involve themselves in the business problems and legal difficulties of their congregations, in their illnesses, human relations, children's education, marital conflicts, moving of homes, etc. The minister is expected to pray over all these matters, and is valued according to the degree of his involvement in the mundane,

135. Han Wan Sang, What Problems are in the Korean Church? (Dae Han Christian press, Seoul, 1982) p.200

136. Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., p.34

trivial concerns of his flock as well as in their major crises.

Korean ministers are both the almighty guardians and almighty servants of their congregations.

2.4.8. Non-Political Elements

Traditional shamanist faith does not usually entail political awareness or involvement. Shamanism has no formal organisation or moralistic social dogma¹³⁷. As a religion focused on the individual subject in relation to God, it disregards political life and activity.

Although the Korean church generally attempts to remain detached from politics, in its early days the church was often a refuge and secret meeting place for Korean nationalists who opposed Japan and sought the support of foreign powers¹³⁸.

One section of the Korean Christian church which has liberal theology sympathies opposes the despotism of the military regime in the 1970s-1980s, but this was a small minority¹³⁹.

137. Yoo Dong Sik, op cit., p.19

138. Son Byong Ho, op cit., p.403

139. Lee Yo Han, op cit., p.48

The prophets of the Old Testament cried out for social justice, but this social conscience has failed to manifest itself in the Korean Church which remains largely non-political. Although the early missionaries taught a non-political Gospel, the dissociation of the church from politics is more probably a result of the influence of shamanism with its complete disregard for political issues.

2.5. PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE AND PRACTISE OF SHAMANISM IN KOREAN CHURCH LIFE

The influence which Shamanism has had on the Korean Christian church is not in the area of dogma. It is discussed in relation to the style and practice of faith and the spreading of the Gospel.

2.5.1. In Worship

In the Korean church, music, particularly the church choir, plays an important role in worship, just as music is a primary element of shamanist ritual. The names of the choir director and accompanist are printed with that of the minister on the first page of the Order of Service. The gut, with song and dance, has been adapted to create exciting church services. Cheon Boo Gyo, a

heretical offshot of Christianity, resembles Shamanism in this respect.

Some Korean churches which judged the praise method of Cheon Boo Gyo to be heretical have in fact recently adopted a similar style of worship one after another. The notion that if people sing praise in incantatory fashion the Holy Spirit will be present amongst them is shamanistic in origin.

When Christians pray long formulaic, repetitive prayers, as if memorising the script of the shaman, the meaning of their prayers is lost. People engage in prolonged prayers and value direct prayer, the meaning of which they may not know.

In the beginning of the new year people go to a shaman or fortune-teller to ask for good luck for the year. In Christianity a New Year service is held in the Korean church. During the New Year service the pastor requests his members to draw from a container passages of scripture which are written on pieces of paper which have been prepared beforehand by the minister. The scripture is an instruction for the year for each member. This practice is influenced by the shamanistic practice.

Shamanistic folk are satisfied when they get some blessing,

healing or other result in the ritual. In the orthodox Christian faith Christians sacrifice themselves in the service of God but do not expect to receive proportional compensation. This is sometimes misunderstood by Korean Christians, so after the completion of the service, Korean people are satisfied when they feel uplifted. These practices are shamanistic.

Early morning prayer in the Korean Christian church originated in shamanist practice, in which women prayed to spirits early in the morning with clean water¹⁴⁰. If a minister dislikes leading early morning prayer meetings he is driven away from the church. As the shamans played the gut with loud voices, so Korean Christians believe that shouted prayers are more effective than spoken ones. This has led residents in the neighbourhood of churches to complain, with the result that Korean Christians resort to mountain retreats for charismatic prayer sessions.

Protestant churches value the sermon, but as a part of the worship service. However, many Korean Christians believed that the sermon alone is important: if they are busy, they will time their church going in order to audit the sermon¹⁴¹. This habit also

140. O Byong Se, Dictionary of Theology(The Korean Society for Reformed Faith and Action, Kimpo, Korea, 1984) p.258

141. Kim So Yeong, Worship Renovation of Korean Church(The Pastoral Monthly, vol.204, Seoul, 1993) p.53

emanates from Shamanism, in which believers would ignore the playing of the shaman, and attend only to her oration. The role of the believer in worship is therefore unclear¹⁴². The word for worship participation is actually Ye Bae Bon Da (spectator worship). This suggests the shamanistic style of worship, where believers are the audience to the shaman's display, rather than being actively involved in the process. In the shaman's gut, the shaman plays all roles, and the believer simply listens to the oracle. The Shamanistic Christian therefore wishes to hear the pastor's sermon, particularly if it deals with blessing. Pastor Cho Yong Ki is the most successful preacher of 'blessing sermons' in Korea¹⁴³. Korean Christians do not enjoy sermons which encourage repentance and confession.

As spectators, Korean Christians tend to criticise the content and mood of a service. More than half the members of a church do not punctually observe the commencement time of the service.

Church ministers are more concerned with the members' attendance than with the sacrificial attitude of members.

The offering is not given in a spirit of gratitude to God, but in

142. Ibid., p.36

143. Kim Myong Hyok, Biblical Reformed Thought and Korean Christian Faith (Collection of Treatises of Korean Christianity, vol.5, Pung Man, Seoul, 1988) p.156

order to avert punishment and disaster, as in Shamanism. Tithes are donated as an obligation on the part of the believer and as a guarantee, referring to Malachi 3:10¹⁴⁴. Because of the prominence given to this aspect of Christian duty in Korea, the Korean church is renowned for the generosity of its adherents. Their willingness to support the church financially has had very positive consequences in that the funds thus obtained have aided the expansion of the church and established its self-sufficiency.

2.5.2. Establishment of Faith

Korean Christians have inherited Jeok Gong thought (the construction of goodness) from Buddhism. This form of thought is an obstacle to the acceptance of the Gospel. People see belief in Jesus as an option once they have attained goodness. Indeed, even Sunday school teachers tend to teach in accordance with this philosophy¹⁴⁵.

The Gospel teaches that salvation is freely given (Romans 3:24). In the 1980s, some churches started formal prayer meetings for success in matric exams¹⁴⁶. Many Korean Christians think that

144. Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., Korean Church and Shamanism, p.57

145. Park Jong Ku, op cit., Korean Church and Shamanism, p.143

146. Kim So Yeong, op cit., Worship Renovation of Korean Church, p.38

special prayers and donations can be exchanged for university admission. Some ministers who do not conduct such meetings receive complaints from their members about the lack of this service.

Korean Christians stress the value of physical healing, even though the healing offered by Jesus was complete healing of body, mind and soul.

Pastor Baek Byong Ryong, formerly of Dae Gu Young Rak Presbyterian Church, was admired for healing his members of disease with a coin, without prayer, and he prophesied to 80% of the young people in his church that they would become pastors. Many Korean Christians seek liberation directly through prophetic prayer without reference to the Bible, as if receiving the oracle of a shaman.

The Da Mi Mission organisation, whose belief that the Second Coming of Christ would occur on October 28, 1992, was publicised world-wide, is typical of those elements within the church which promise immediate liberation through prophecy, and the popularity of the group testifies to the susceptibility of Korean Christians

in this regard¹⁴⁷.

The susceptibility to prophecy is a tendency long nurtured in Koreans and reinforced by their habit of consulting fortune-tellers, and the practice of engaging in long prayer rituals arises from the ancient custom of praying to the shamanist mountain god (Seong Hwang Je).

2.5.3. In Life Style

Even though a Christian woman¹⁴⁸ elder had a fatalistic philosophy, when her young son died in a motor car accident, she wrote in a letter to her minister:

"That my young son died is a sign that God wants me to gain a deeper faith. [The accident] was his fate, so I pledge that I am trying to grow in faith."

It is apparent from this letter that the woman believed that if

147. Kim Yeong Jae, Why does the Korean Church Stress the Eschatology? (The Pastoral Monthly, vol.198, Seoul, 1993) p.136; Tak Myong Hwan, Does the End of the World come in 1992 (Kuk Jong Press, Seoul, 1990) pp.74-95

148. Her name is Lee Bok Young and she lives in the city of Daegu of Korea.

her faith had been deeper, or her Christianity stronger, her son would not have met with his accident. Motor car accidents can occur at any time or place. The explicit connection between misfortune and the testing of faith is one which originates in shamanistic attitudes towards blessing, punishment and God.

There are other cases which prove this theory. When Korean Christians hold a funeral service, the family deliberates carefully over the position of the grave.¹⁴⁹ They also consider the direction in which the body will be laid.

When Koreans move house, they commonly hold a prayer meeting to ask a blessing on the dwelling. This is akin to the Seong Jeu Pu Ri Gut of shamanism. When a newly-built house is erected, a prayer ceremony is held at the commencement of construction. This echoes the Gosa of Shamanism.

When Koreans offer a minister hospitality, it is because they seek blessing, rather than as an expression of gratitude or friendship.

2.5.4. In Customs

149. Shin Tae Ung, op cit., The spirits' perception of Korean traditional faith, p.112.

Most Korean Christians can be regarded as Confucians or Shamanists who attend a Christian church. When marrying, Protestant Christians adopt the western style up to a point, having a ceremony led by the pastor. Thereafter, they don traditional dress and follow the traditional procedure.

Korean people habitually pray for the dead. The salutation is "myong bok eul bil da," which means "pray for the repose of the soul". In the funeral ceremony, Korean Christians burn incense, light candles, and leave an open Bible on a table near the body. This is a mixed ritual. The Bible does not give instructions about the treatment of the dead. The placing of the Bible and hymn book beside the corpse is based on the belief that the spirit will read these after entering the realm of evil.

Ancestor worship was traditionally practised in Korea. This is not a sign of respect for parents, but is done in order for children to obtain blessing. This ancestor worship has evolved into Chu Do Sik, in which the birthday or death day of the deceased is commemorated by displaying pictures of him/her and inviting the minister to offer prayers and share refreshments.

In Korea, people go to Seong Myo (visiting the cemetery) on New Year's Day (15 August according to lunar calendar). This

Shamanist practice is continued by Christians.

Some scholars argue that ancestor worship has a religious character and is the worship of dead men.¹⁵⁰ The Korean church had decided that ancestor worship violates Biblical injunction.¹⁵¹ The Asian theological conference¹⁵² which was held in Taiwan prohibited ancestor worship. However, recently, the Korean Catholic church, Korean Full Gospel Church and some Presbyterian churches have begun to allow ancestor worship. In the Catholic church, the Pope decreed that ancestor worship be permitted.¹⁵³

2.5.5. In Ideas

After becoming Christians, Koreans' ideas concerning civil life remain unchanged. In Shamanism, the projects or plans of the spirits or God can be influenced by human actions, such as the Shamanist gut. This belief leads Koreans to perceive God as their servant, somebody who can be persuaded to do their bidding.

150. Ok Han Heum, Practical understanding for ancestor, (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol.39, Seoul, 1984) p.55

151. Kim Myong Hyok, Historical understanding to ancestor worship (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol.39, Seoul, 1984), p.41

152. Son Bong Ho, Ancestor worship and modern culture (Pul Bit Ministry, Vol.39, Seoul, 1984) p.50

153. Kim Myong Hyok., op cit., p.41.

Therefore, their prayers directly reflect their personal desires. This is fundamentally at odds with Christian dogma, since, instead of seeking the accomplishment of God's will on earth, these supplicants desire the working of their own will in heaven.

These attitudes are also connected with the positivist beliefs of Pastor Robert Schuller of the Crystal Church¹⁵⁴ (U.S.A.) who teaches that work and commitment inevitably yield commensurate tangible returns. This encourages people to seek prophecies and assurances for the future, rather than applying themselves to God's work disinterestedly.

Korean Christians in foreign countries are particularly conscientious in their church attendance. Korean emigrant churches are an interesting phenomenon, in that they attract almost all members of the expatriate communities, whether Christian or non-Christian. This is because the church offers fellowship, support and is a mine of community information, but those who attend do not necessarily gain in faith or spiritual maturity.

The Sabbath is widely observed by Korean Christians, who enjoy

154. Kim Eun Gon, Faith education and life for success (Seong Kwang Publishing, Seoul, 1990) p.321

the opportunity of fun and recreation.

Korean people have a strong belief in the prophetic power of dreams, being firmly convinced that events which occur in dreams will be realised. In Shamanism, people believe that spirits provide information and guidance concerning the future in dreams, and there are many recorded examples of prophetic dreams.

Christians in Korea are commonly known as Yesu Jaengi (Jesus Specialists). This term indicates that people recognise Christians as members of a specialised religious group. The word Jaengi (Specialist) means that one is a specialist in one's field, but not in any other field. In this sense, the Christian is a Jesus Specialist in church, but reverts to being a non-specialist, i.e. an ordinary person, in the general sphere of everyday life after his devotions.

2.5.6. Ministry Style

The ministry style of Korean Christian ministers is very similar to that of Shamanism. Shamanism is extremely charismatic, and the churches in which ministers exercise charismatic power over their congregations are growing. This phenomenon is evident throughout the Christian church and transcends denominations. Ministers who manifest extraordinary spiritual gifts are especially recognised and valued by members.

The pastor who has the gifts of the Holy Spirit gains absolute authority and readily receives the respect and cooperation of the congregation, just as the shaman who was believed to be spirit-possessed was more highly esteemed than the hereditary shaman who had merely acquired the appropriate skills.

Ministers are extremely anxious to retain the loyalty and devotion of their church members, and establish elaborate structures to prevent defection. Cellular regional networks are organised and managed by the minister in a manner which is reminiscent of the shamanist Dan Gol Pan. Like the Dan Gol shaman, who performs her gut at the homes of adherents, the minister undertakes an intensive programme of home visiting to promote the strength and cohesion of his congregation and ensure the continuing support of members. This is currently the main work of Korean church ministers, as it was of the shaman.

So, each church which does not have Dan Gol Pan is competing for church members. In this scramble for disciples, some churches have sought to establish themselves in affluent areas, just as shamans sought to perform their gut in wealthy villages. Examples of such churches are the Dok Rib Moon Church and the Chung Hyon Church.

Therefore, when evangelising, Korean ministers stress attendance and participation within their own particular sects and denominations, and tend to disregard the universal significance of the Gospel. Evangelism is more in the nature of a membership drive to advance local interests than a true Christian mission.

Since the 1970s, part of the churches' evangelical thrust has been a Sunday mass mobilisation programme which is an attempt to swell attendance at Sunday services. The particular emphasis of this outreach is strongly suggestive of the Shamanist practice of inviting and attracting as many customers as possible to enhance the status of the shaman and ensure the efficacy of the gut.

Several times a year, churches organise "marathon" worship sessions, when the service is repeated seven - eleven times during the course of a Sunday. These are gala affairs in which celebrities are invited to participate as star attractions, and where prominent people give their testimonies. The programme for these services is varied, including popular music groups, etc. The aim of these special Sunday services is to draw new members, to revive the interest of lapsed members, and to lure members from rival congregations. All active members are assigned tasks and goals for the occasion, eg to bring ten prospective converts to the services. However, despite these zealous attempts to

increase numbers, membership generally stabilises at previous levels after the "festive" programme.¹⁵⁵

One of the perpetual tasks of ministers is home-visiting for the purpose of praying and preaching for blessing. As the shaman worships Eo P Wang Sin (the Property God), so ministers conduct services at the opening of shops, praying for the success and prosperity of businesses. This is a vital branch of ministry for Korean pastors. Christian ministers go so far as to pray for the success of gambling shops and liquor stores at their opening ceremonies! Korean ministers are adept at inventing and improvising new forms of service for every imaginable occasion or event.

The shaman tells fortunes according to the wealth of his customer and according to the expectations which he shrewdly intuitis. Likewise, Christian ministers shrewdly assess the requirements of their church members and preach to these needs in order to gain popularity.

The Shaman used to visit each follower's home and pray for peace and security and other blessings. In the same way, the Korean pastor conducts the home visiting ministry very well and that is

155. Lee Yo Han, op cit., The Church program with no purpose, p.49

why church members attend the services diligently and have an increasingly positive image of Christianity.

Korean people regarded the shaman as a mediator between god and humanity. Likewise Korean Christians regard pastors as men of God. Christians regard the pastor as a holy, sacred person who is highly respected and they show him deference accordingly.

In Korea the minister is guided to go into the main bedroom and is requested to sit in the specially appointed place when home visiting. This practice is like shamanism in which the people have a shrine to the gods in a certain place in their homes.

2.5.7. Current Practice of Faith in the Full Gospel Church

The style of service in the Korean Full Gospel Church is very similar to the Shamanist gut. Their services include song and dance to the accompaniment of drums and several other musical instruments which help to induce religious ecstasy.

Like the shaman who functions as an oracle, the Korean Full Gospel minister uses services to prophesy, to expel evil spirits, to identify sickness amongst members and heal, and to forecast individual fortunes. Full Gospel congregations enjoy loud,

participatory prayer in tongues, worshipping volubly en masse.

Just as the shaman who delivered the word of the oracle was regarded as authentic, the minister who is able to pray in tongues is regarded in the Full Gospel Church as genuinely manifesting the Holy Spirit. The gift of speaking in tongues is considered proof of the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Should a minister lack this facility, it is doubted whether he is capable of offering a genuine message of salvation.

Full Gospel ministers have a spiritual hierarchy in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are imparted, often secretly, from senior to junior leaders. This accords with the shamanist pattern in which mature shamans initiate novices into the skills and mysteries of their art, and the religion is perpetuated through personal transmission.

Because of the personal nature of the spiritual hierarchies within the Full Gospel Church, it is inevitable that competition and rivalry occur. This has led to the splintering of the main body into several sub-denominations. Because of the nature of their religious practices, the Full Gospel churches claim to be spirit-filled, in contrast with other denominations¹⁵⁶ which they

156. Choi Jung Hyon, op cit., p.63

regard as lacking the presence of the Holy Spirit. Their attitude in faith is unduly conceited. Any Christian can pray for healing with the laying-on of hands, and where faith is paramount, divergences in spiritual practice do not cause irreparable damage.

Korean people enjoy those things which edify and enlighten, but are also possessed of the 'han', which is considered an apt signifier for their identity. Those emotions fused with traditional religion to form a character peculiar to Koreans, a character which has subsequently found expression in the Korean Protestant church. The Korean church involves many Shamanistic elements: a strong emphasis on the individual, dependence on a higher power, formalism, prophecy and the absence of an ethical foundation. Sacrificial prayer and service, and artistic and musical sensibility have given impetus to constructive development within the church.

3. THE ROLE OF SHAMANISM IN KOREAN CHURCH GROWTH

If or when we see the growth of the Korean church and the phenomenon of religious and social transformation developing we must search for the evidence of shamanism.

When Protestantism was imported into Korea, there was no religious opposition. Shamanism was ready to accommodate or assimilate Christianity¹⁵⁷. Shamanism, which mediates between the natural and supernatural worlds, provided a stable religious foundation. In the fertile soil of Korean religious sensibility, the seeds of Christianity germinated, blossomed and bore fruit.

Yoo Dong Sik¹⁵⁸ argued that the mindset of the Korean people facilitated the rapid growth of Christianity. George Jones¹⁵⁹ said that the Korean people have a strongly religious character, and that their particular mentality was certainly a factor in the expansion of the church.

It was shown in previous section that the traditional Korean Shamanist religion has influenced the Korean Christian church enormously and is still deeply involved in contemporary church life. How exactly did Shamanism contribute to Korean church growth?

157. Roy E. Shearer, *The History of Korean Church Growth*(The Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1966) p.29

158. You Dong Sik, *Korean Religions and Christianity*(Dae Han Christianity Books, Seoul, 1979) pp.22-23

159. George Jones., *Korea: The Land, People and Customs*(Cincinnati: Gannings and Graham, 1907) p.49

3.1. Reasons for Penetration of Korean Christian Church by Shamanism

The capacity of Shamanism could accommodate Christianity because Shamanism always absorbed foreign religions or comfortably co-existed with them, and because each common factor between the religions made Christianity more acceptable. This alone played a role in church growth.

Korean people easily understood Christianity because of their existing concept of a supernatural God(Romans 1:19-20). Palmer agrees with this interpretation¹⁶⁰. John Ross argued that because the name Ha Na Nim(God) generally used in Korea was adopted by Christian missionaries, there was no conceptual confusion for prospective Korean converts and therefore the problems of resistance to 'Yahweh' encountered in China were avoided¹⁶¹. The Korean Catholic church did not adopt the established Korean term 'Ha Na Nim', but chose instead to use the name 'Cheon Ju'(Lord of Heaven), which did not find ready acceptance, and as a result

160. S.J.Palmer, Korea and Christianity: The Problems of Identification with Tradition(Holly Corporation, Seoul, 1967) p.8

161. John Ross, History of Korea(Elliot Stock: London, 1891) p.335

their church growth was impeded¹⁶².

Since the ancient period in Korea, conflict amongst religions has been almost unknown. No single religion has been allowed to become hegemonic, or to eradicate other religions on political or dogmatic grounds. Hence foreign, imported religions have generally been received with tolerance and open-mindedness¹⁶³. Unlike Europe, Korea has never experienced 'witch-hunting', or any significant degree of religious persecution.

God has created within certain individuals an awareness of His existence which enables them to give evidence of His being through their witness, and prepares people for the full acceptance of the Christian gospel of salvation. We see this in the Korean people¹⁶⁴.

As was indicated in this chapter B 1, Christianity does not repudiate Shamanist belief, but utilises it in the worship of people who traditionally pray for wealth and peace through the shaman. Shamanistic Christianity was felt to be more spiritual

162. Don Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts*(Word of Life Press, Seoul, 1992) p.88

163. Cho Seong Nho, Kim Ji Cheol., *Gospel and Culture*(Hyeon Dae Theology Institute, Seoul, 1992) p.198

164. Don Richardson, *op cit.*, pp.137-138. See the following book for further study: Francis Mason's *The Korean Apostle*(Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1861)p.10

and aboriginal than imported European forms¹⁶⁵. Therefore, Shamanism, which has no dogma per se, accorded effortlessly with Christianity, and Christianity in Korea became increasingly infused with Shamanist elements. As the connections between Shamanism and Christianity were forged, the Shamanist influence became a major factor in church growth.

3.2. In Church Growth

3.2.1. The role of shamanism in the history of the Korean church

In the history of the development of Korean Christianity, the influence exercised by elements of Shamanism on the growth of Christianity is very diverse in different periods.

In each phase of church growth, different elements of shamanism were incorporated into the character of the church according to the particular conditions and pressures of the time. The church itself and the Korean folk acquiesced in the permeation of Christianity by Shamanism.

3.2.1.1. Early Period

165. Choi Jung Hyon, Korean Church and Shamanism (Seong Kwang Press, Seoul, 1993) p.167

The religious history of Korea shows that, during the early period of Christianity in Korea, the older religions of Buddhism, Confucianism and Shamanism were powerless in those uneasy times of social and political upheaval. Amidst this general insecurity and religious desert, people experience a desperate spiritual thirst which inclined them to pursue a new religion¹⁶⁶. Since they were unable to express openly their disillusionment, dissatisfaction and despair or to improve their material conditions, people sought spiritual refuge and consolation. The established habit of seeking resolution of problems and healing of spiritual disease in the Shamanists but extended and translated itself into the forms of Christian worship, i.e. song, prayer, etc¹⁶⁷.

Then, too, Christianity adopted the title for God used in Shamanism, which enabled people to retain their God-centred faith while making the transition to a new belief system¹⁶⁸.

Confucianism included a belief in ancestor worship, but this is

166. Kim Young Han, Korean Christianity and Faith(Collection of Treatises of Korean Christianity Study, vol.5, Pung Man, Seoul, 1988) p.24

167. Ibid., p.52; Harry A. Rhodes, History of the Korea Mission: Presbyterian Church U.S.A. 1884-1934, p.282

168. Kim Young Han, op cit., Korean Christianity and Faith, p.50

not practised in a structured, formal ritual. Buddhism has a mass called Beob Hue, but this mass is purely for teaching and preaching, and cannot be classified as a religious ritual. Therefore, these religions were found to be spiritually unrewarding, and the Korean people in search of a substitute for the Shamanist gut found satisfaction in the worship services of the Christian churches, which entailed familiar elements of ritual, performance and excitation¹⁶⁹.

3.2.1.2. Major Revival of 1910

After the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910, the general population was extremely despondent, and knew that the rehabilitation of the country was dependent on the empowerment of people through mass education, training and the cultivation of men of talent. So, many privileged young people attended mission schools which provided an elite, modern, western-style education¹⁷⁰. This preoccupation with education spilt over also into the study of religion and led to conscientious attendance of church Bible class meetings¹⁷¹.

169. Ibid, p.51

170. Kim Chi Su, "Literature of the Colonial Period" in the National Language for Student(Han Kuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, 1979) pp.85-86

171. Roy E. Shearer, trans. Seung Ick Lee, Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea(The Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1966) pp.247-248

Originally, Korean people used to recite the Scriptures of Confucianism and the incantations of Shamanism. After the establishment of Christianity, people sought to familiarise themselves with the Christian Scriptures through Bible study, and found that the recitation of Bible verses fulfilled certain of their spiritual needs. In Shamanism, the shaman recites perfectly his incantations to dispel evil magically. Korean people attributed similar spiritual power and benefits to the recitation of Christian Scriptures. Even nowadays, the Bible recitation competition is an important social event in any church calender¹⁷².

3.2.1.3. Period of Japanese Colonisation

After the failure of independence movements in 1919, Korean people lost all hope of independence. Many people emigrated in despair, to Manchuria, China and the U.S.A.¹⁷³ As a reaction to the failure of independence, those Koreans whose hopes of gaining happiness in the material world had been disappointed aspired instead to a supernatural, spiritual transcendence. This manifested itself in a spiritual revival movement and a focus on

172. Lee Yo Han, The Church Program with no Purpose (Mission World, vol.18, Seoul, 1993) p.51

173. Kim Chan Jeong, The Korean People of the Silk Road (Shin Dong A., vol.383, The Dong A Il Bo Sa, 1993) pp.531-533; Roy E. Shearer, op cit., p.67

the Holy Spirit in Christian life.

Korean Shamanism was naturally, originally, a spiritual religion involving the playing of Gang Sin(invocation of spirits) and Gong Su(oracle). Because of these elements, Shamanism provided a firm spiritual and mystical basis for Christianity. The healing, oracle, exorcism and ecstasy of Shamanism were found to be similar to practices of Christian faith as well: healing, prophecy, exorcism, speaking in tongues and Ib Sin(divination). The playing of Shamanist rituals is also related to the mysticism of Christianity.

The pastor Lee Young Do¹⁷⁴ is renowned leader of the popular mystical movement in the Korean Christian church. The mystical movement is especially powerful in the Full Gospel Church, the Jerusalem Church, and the Elijah Gospel Mission Church. These churches equate speaking in tongues with salvation, and provide training in the gift of speaking in tongues, believing that redemption is unattainable without this facility.

The teaching of tongues is clearly a derivation from Shamanism in which student Shamans are tutored in the art of incantation until

174. Kim Yang Seon, op cit., The Study of Korean church History, p.163

they 'graduate' and are able to perform the gut independently.

In this way Shamanism was a model for the development and exercise of spiritual gifts in the Korean Christian church.

3.2.1.4. Pre- and Post-War Period(after independence):1945-1959

Independence was granted to the Korean people on August 15, 1945, but for political reasons Korea was divided. This was a period of strong ideological contestation between East and West, and the Koreans were caught up in an extremely complex political dynamic which caused major internal conflict. Finally, this conflict erupted into the Korean war in which approximately two million people died. In this situation, common people were terrorised by the ruling national democratic forces by day, and by Communist guerrillas at night¹⁷⁵. In reaction, people abandoned themselves to fatalism, committing all things to God in their paralysing powerlessness.

Shamanism originally interpreted everything as occurring by divine providence, and Koreans found in Christianity a similar providential vision. During those uncertain times, many mountain prayer houses, similar to Shamanist mountain god shrines, were

175. Cho Dong Jin, The Pastor who went to the Mountain Ji Ri (The Pastoral Monthly, vol.206, Seoul, 1993) pp.271-272

established¹⁷⁶. Na Un Mong's "Yong Moon San mountain prayer house movement" was one of the strongest mystical groups, having a great deal of influence throughout the Christian community of Korea. People flocked to the more mystical Christian factions.

3.2.1.5. In the Industrial Development Period: 1960s-1970s

After the April 19 civil liberation in 1960, Korean society became more complex and extraordinary. On May 16, 1961, a military coup d'etat took place, after which the new government implemented a five-year economic development plan. Because of this plan, Korean industry burgeoned and the country experienced rapid economic advancement. The citizens of Korea benefitted materially, becoming increasingly wealthy.

During this time, church ministers began to preach a gospel of prosperity, arguing that God's blessings were both spiritual and material and teaching that the acquisition of wealth was the fruit of faith. The faith element of Shamanism provided a basis for this position, and Shamanists were drawn to the church in the hope of experiencing greater blessings, i.e. gaining more riches. Just as people had believed that paying large fees to shamans would earn them good fortune, so they now placed their faith in

176. Lee Hun Ku, Korean Traditional Religion and Korean Church(Yeon Hab, Seoul, 1992) p.167

the church and made massive contributions as an investment in future prosperity. Some believers sold their homes and property, donating the proceeds to church funds as a form of insurance policy. One consequence of the enormous inflow of capital was a church building boom. Actually, many church members were extremely affluent, but there is no way of establishing whether this prosperity resulted from God's blessing or from a social and economic reform.

Anyhow, people's desire for blessing drove them increasingly to the church which led to remarkable growth, especially amongst those groups which stressed the material benefits accruing from faith.

3.2.1.6. 1980 to the Present

During this period the church has interested itself in ensuring the permanency of places of worship. We have already considered the extravagance of the accoutrements of Shamanism. Wealthy Korean Churches expend vast sums of money on accessories, extensions and auxiliary services. Expensive audio systems, illumination, pipe organs and ornamentation are acquired. Annexes to the church complexes, such as parking areas, cemeteries and education facilities are established, as well as centres for retreats, etc. The physical size and beauty of the church

facilities is a generally accepted measure of its success.

Shamanism involves the lavish enjoyment of food, song, dance and culture in the gut ritual. In the modern Korean church, considerable sums are invested in bands, choirs, etc., which are an integral part of the praise-worship movement. The emergence of an 'entertainment industry' within the church arises from the elements of spectacle and entertainment in Shamanism.

3.2.2. In growth of faith

3.2.2.1. Acceptance of faith

Shamanism originally had the capacity to receive Christianity favourably, because of their shared objectives of dispelling evil and invoking blessing. The superstitious mind was receptive to the Christian concept of God and the Mi Reuk Bul idea easily accommodated the Christian notion of the advent and the millennium¹⁷⁷. The Christian notion of the comforting presence of the Holy Spirits accorded with Shamanist belief in the protectio

177. Kim Young Han, op cit., p.56

of ancestral spirits. The mystical connotations of the number seven, signifying God, appears also in Shamanism. The priestly role of the shaman as mediator between the supernatural and natural realms is paralleled by the significance of Jesus Christ as the sacrificial offering reconciling God and humanity. The title of God is the same in both Christian and Shamanist discourse, and the term for the shaman, Sim Bang, is used also to refer to the visiting ministry of church pastors. Another title of the shaman, Man Sin(Agent of All Gods) is related to the function of the pastor. Spiritual faith, and the perception of the hereafter or metaphysical realm, are also very similar in form in Christianity and Shamanism¹⁷⁸.

3.2.2.2. In Faith Revival

Shamanist faith, which is based on a dependence on God for everything, accords with the Christian teaching of total reliance on, and submission to, God. The emotional release, spiritual consolation and lightening of heart experienced by believers through the acts of Christian worship, which are not unlike the cathartic effects of the Shamanist gut, provide an strong incentive for church attendance and commitment to faith.

178. Shin Tae Ung, The Perceptions of Spirits in Korean Traditonal Faith(Pul Bit Ministry, vol.60, 1986) p.67

Shamanistic faith in the efficacy of the fortune-telling fee prompts modern Korean Christians to contribute generously and enthusiastically to church funds.

The influence of lengthy Shamanist incantations is evident in the practices of Korean Christians who habitually engage in prolonged periods of prayer. In Shamanism, ordinary people conducted minor prayer rituals (Bi Nyom) within their won homes, praying to spirits without the offices of the shaman. This form of private worship gave birth to the Korean practice of laymen planting churches without the services of an authorised pastor or missionary¹⁷⁹.

The fact that a Korean church had already been founded before the arrival of missionaries was previously referred to in Chapter Five A. The spiritual communion phenomenon of Shamanism became attached to the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit and the believers' experience of being filled with the spirit.

Clearly, the Korean Christian church is immersed in Shamanism.

3.2.3. In External Growth

3.2.3.1. In Evangelism

179. See chapter Five 1

Shamanism has no ethical basis or moral code¹⁸⁰. This feature of Shamanism has affected the evangelical activities of the church. Evangelists encourage the belief that church attendance and participation will in themselves lead to redemption, without any radical conversion or moral reform on the part of the acolyte.

The Church also receives people into membership indiscriminately without any scrutiny of their lives or conduct, so that little genuine commitment to Christian principles is required. Because of this dissociation between lifestyle and church membership members are valued and rated in terms of the regularity of their attendance, rather than in terms of how their Christianity is actively practised. Thus, there are many church officials, such as appointed deacons, whose authority and duties have been conferred solely on the basis of their conspicuous diligence on Sundays, without any reference to their conduct in the broader social context.

The General Mobilisation Sunday programmes which are currently fashionable in Korea arise out of a serious concern with the present state of the church, as do the numerous popular mass meetings.

180. Clark Allen C., Religions of Old Korea (The Christian Literature Society of Korea, Seoul, 1961) p.217

All the above factors contributed to the extraordinary numerical growth of the Korean Christian church.

3.2.3.2. In collection

Secondly, the influence of Shamanism has affected the nature of offerings collected by the church. Korean Christians donate special thanksgiving offerings. It is common practice for people to write their names and thanksgiving messages on the envelopes. These messages are then read publicly by the pastor to the congregation. Shamanistic Christians generally donate exceptional amounts in order to achieve greater blessing, and because the publicity given their acts of generosity enhances their status as believers.

The increase in church revenue resulting from this practice has enabled the church to work more effectively and to expand its foreign mission activities.

3.2.3.3. In Organisation

Organisationally, Korean churches established cells within congregations. This arrangement is patterned on Shamanism, in which the shaman managed the followers under her jurisdiction through the Dan Gol Pan system. The cell system (Kuyok Je Do)

replicates the Dan Gol system. Through the cell system, church ministers regulate and monitor their parishioners to prevent members from leaving or defecting to other congregations. Churches grew large through the effective operation of the Kuyok Je Do, e.g. Myong Seong Presbyterian Church, the Yeo Ui Do Full Gospel Central Church¹⁸¹ and the Keum Ran Methodist Church. Generally, ordained assistant pastors are employed in large Korean churches to act as district managers. These assistant pastors are supported by Jeon Do Sa (non-ordained female pastoral workers) who are then responsible for sections of a district. They, in turn, are assisted by Kweon Chal (group inspectors) who supervise small groups of cells. There are thus four tiers to the church hierarchy, and the extensive involvement of the leadership in prayer meetings, Bible study groups, etc., has promoted Korean church growth enormously. Assistant pastors are fiercely competitive as district managers, which strengthens the cell system and leads to rapid expansion of individual cells. Just as the charismatic power of the shaman attracted followers and was reinforced by the system of retaining their support, so the modern church adopts similar strategies to maintain and extend its membership, e.g. Kang Nam Baptist Church, An Yang Full Gospel Church, Mok Min Presbyterian Church. Cell organisation is crucial in Korean church growth.

181. Yeo Ui Do Full Gospel Church has about 50,000 cells

3.2.3.4. In the Concept of Growth and Success

When shamans conduct the gut ritual, they provide a splendid gut table with an abundance of food and the order of the ritual is both lengthy and elaborate. The externals of Shamanism are spectacular, and the strict observance of form, with the appropriate grandeur in displays and emblems of faith in the gut, are used as measures of its worth and efficacy¹⁸².

The Korean church was heavily influenced by these Shamanistic notions. Korean Christians gauge success and growth in terms of the size and beauty of church buildings, the worth of the church assets, the size of the membership, the social class and level of education of the congregation, and the general wealth of the church. Because of this emphasis on the externals of success, Korean churches vie with each other in gaining members and constructing beautiful buildings, etc. A minister who establishes a large following and houses his congregation in an impressive building acquires commensurate status and esteem. Accordingly, ministers attempt to attract members from the upper echelons of society and retain their support by allocating them prominent positions, and important duties within the church.

182. Lee Hun Ku, op cit., Traditional Religion and Korean Church, p.129

Church members value high academic qualifications, which prompts ministers to pursue their studies in order to command respect.

In a word, the Korean church has grown through an excessive demand for blessing, and a mentality which equates material abundance with growth and success. Despite the positive aspects of the remarkable drive towards Korean church growth, there are also negative implications to be considered.

3.3. Koreanistic worship style

Some shamanistic things are reflected positively in the Korean church: for example early morning prayer meetings, women assistant ministers, memorial services for the dead, the service at the commencement of building a church and on special occasions donations in envelopes with the name of the donor written on the outside.

Harvey Cox is a famous social historian who mentions Korean Christianity in his books. He indicates that the cause of the success of Pastor Yong Ki Cho is that he incorporates some of the elements of the shamanistic religion in the Christian service.

In shamanism the sacred world in which the shaman sees vision is

expected to be understood by his followers. Christianity also says that you have to understand the sanctity of the faith.

The gods do not always enter the shaman. If the gods are invited they come in. If they are not invited the shaman remains an ordinary person. This influence has led to the double life of Korean Christians as faithful Christians on the one hand when they are involved in church life but, on the other hand, when they are not involved in church life they are totally secular people.

3.4. Pastor as shaman

The shaman controls the sprits and makes them helpful to him. Korean pastors are expected by the church members to be the ones who control God and give blessings to the people. One example is in the sermon of the service. The pastor draws a positive response from his followers when he says that they will be blessed.

Members of the congregation are very happy when the shaman visits them and asks for blessings for them. Nowadays Christian members are very happy when the pastor visits them and prays for them at their home. If the pastor does not visit them regularly they are

disappointed.

In the ritual the shaman's performance is very frenetic. The Christian pastor also leads the service very enthusiastically.

3.5. In the Development of Koreanistic Theology

In China some British Baptist missionaries like Richard Timothy and his colleagues, took the local traditional elements and mixed them in with the Christian practice.

Shamanism has historically absorbed imported religions and transformed them into Koreanistic products. The assimilative power of Shamanism is demonstrated especially in the evolution of Christianity in a Koreanistic theology. So, during the 1960s, aboriginalisation theology appeared; in the 1970s, liberating theology, and Koreanistic theology; in the 1980s, Min Jung theology(the people's theology).

The aboriginalisation theology of Yun Seong Beom was motivated by a naive desire to contain the Gospel within a narrowly Koreanistic world view¹⁸³(i.e. to anchor it to the base of shamanist thought).

183. Lee Nung Hwa, The Searching of Cho Seon Shamanism(Dong Moon Seon, Seoul, 1991) p.19

The Koreanistic Pung Ryu Do theology¹⁸⁴ of Yoo Dong Sik attempted to interpret the events of the Gospel in Shamanism and Hwa Rang Do.

The Han theology¹⁸⁵ of Seo Nam Deong was influenced by South American liberation theology. He asserted the primacy of political and economic liberation from difficult material conditions.

The Min Jung theology(the people's theology) of An Byong Moo¹⁸⁶ is an attempt to connect the contemporary Korean zeitgeist and the folk Han with the Gospel, within the framework of Shamanistic puri. His theology represents God not as transcendent, but as immanent, participating in daily events in the real world. This developed in reaction to conservative theology.

Recently, churches which allowed Shamanistic Je-Sa(ancestor worship) have appeared. These churches also make further advances and concessions towards Shamanists.

184. Yoo Dong Sik, op cit., Korean Religions and Christianity, p.231

185. Seo Nam Dong, "The Formalisation of Han and its Theological Thought" in Min jung and Korean Theology(The Institute of Korean Theology, Seoul, 1991) p.319 ff.

186. Ahn Byong Moo, The Story of Min Jung Theology(The Institute of Korean Theology, Seoul, 1990)

3.6. In Social Development(especially Social Service)

3.6.1. In Art and Culture

In the early mission period, the Korean church contributed greatly to the dissemination of knowledge, cultural development, and the evolution and acceptance of Han Geul(Korean letters) which were used in the translation of the Bible¹⁸⁷. At that time, Korean society was living through the end of the Lee Dynasty, and experiencing a transition to modernism. This was a culturally chaotic period in the country's history. The king, Se Jong Dae Wang, of the Lee Dynasty, created and distributed new Korean characters, the Han Geul, through the efforts of linguistic scholars in 1443¹⁸⁸. However, the upper-class intelligentsia believed that the more difficult Chinese characters, Han Mun, were superior to the Han Geul, which were regarded as simplistic. The new Korean characters were contemptuously termed Eon Mun, and were disdainfully disregarded by those classes with pretensions to scholarship. Only women and common folk, who did not receive formal schooling, used the Han Geul. However, the complex and intricate Han Mun could not survive as popular characters.

187. Joo Jae Yong, *The Korean People(Min Jung) and the History of Korean Protestant Church in Min Jung and Korean Theology(The literature of Korean Theology, Seoul, 1991)* p.221

188. Kim Jeong Hak, Lee Hyon Huei, *op cit.*, *The History of Korea*, p.161

During this period of contestation between the rival systems, Shamanism became the custodian of Eon Mun: Shamanist literature used the new Korean characters in recording songs and incantations¹⁸⁹. This involvement of Shamanist religion in the protection and preservation of the 'Eon Mun' led to the Han Geul translation of the Bible and the development of the Han Geul.

Subsequently, the Han Geul Bible played a pivotal role in spreading knowledge and combating illiteracy amongst Koreans¹⁹⁰. Most national language scholars, such as Ju Shi Kyong, Choi Hyeon Bae and Lee Heui Seung, agree with this assertion. Thereafter, the newly emergent intelligentsia began to produce literature in Han Geul.

Korean people were accustomed to the musical forms of Shamanist religion, which were not unlike the music and hymns of Christianity. In order to learn Western music, Korean attended Christian worship services and mission schools. Therefore, most early twentieth century Western musicians in Korea were

189. Choi Gil Seong, Shaman of Korea(Yeol Hwa Dang, Seoul, 1985) p.158; Religion and Society Institute of Korea, Dictionary of Korean Religion and Culture(Jib Moon Dang, Seoul, 1991) p.251

190. Kim Yang Seon, op cit., The Study of Korean Church History, p.74.

Christian¹⁹¹. In particular, the Korean National Anthem, 'Ae Kuk Ga', is from a poem by Yun Chi Young set to a melody by An Ik Tae, both of whom were Christians. The 'Ae Kuk Ga' was initially sung to the tune of 'Auld lang Syne' in the Korean hymn book, before being set to the present tune by An Ik Tae. The influence of Christianity is apparent in the first verse of Ae Kuk Ga, in the lines, "God protects our country".

Even in modern times, the majority of musicians are Christians. Most Christian universities have music schools, whereas non-Christian universities do not. For example, Yeon Sei, Yi Hwa, Jung Ang, Han Yang, Bae Jae, Seong Shin, Mok Won and Gye Myong all have music departments, while Dong Kuk, Geon Duk, Dan Kuk, Kwang Un, Han Kuk Foreign Language Studies, Hong ik, Korye and Kuk Min, which are non-Christian, have no music departments even today.

Therefore, many applicants for studies in literature, art and music attend Christian churches. This artistic character of Shamanism flowered in the church.

3.6.2. In Social Service

191. Lee Yoo Seon, A Hundred Years History of Western Music in Korea (University of Joong Ang, Seoul, 1976) pp.33-66, 110-152

The Christian church functioned as a means of resolving and realising educational, political, economic, social, religious and cultural needs and desires. Through its social services the church grew in power and extent.

Shamanism had previously provided a focus for the religious needs of the community, a role which was then readily assumed by the Christian church. Just as Shamanism was involved in the areas of healing and education, so the Korean Christian church has been responsible for the founding of many schools and hospitals.

After the 1960s, the church acted as a complainant to the State President on matters of social injustice and human rights.

According to some literature¹⁹², the shaman performed drama in the royal palaces depicting the grievances of the common people, e.g. objections to heavy taxation. The shaman thus mediated in social concerns between the people and the authorities. In similar fashion, Korean Christian pastors have developed an image of a church which recognises social responsibility and demonstrates social concern.

3.7. The Negative Role

192. Lee Nung Hwa, The searching of Cho Seon Shamanism (Dong Moon Seon, Seoul, 1991) p.19

As was previously explained, Shamanism has played a major role in church growth. However, the negative aspect of this role is also apparent.

Those churches which stress material blessing increased membership, but often to the detriment of the spiritual life of the church, e.g. prayer.

A further effect was a drifting away from the real kernel of the Gospel. therefore, there is a tendency to view God merely as source of blessing and the church as an instrument or agent.

Currently, with economic development in Korea, the faith which desires blessing has been partially satisfied in the acquisition of material wealth, which has led to declining percentages in church attendance, and a weakening or dulling of Christian zeal. Although this decline is not significant, and is not clearly reflected in empirical data, it is a trend which can be recognised.

The Korean Christian church has adapted the arrangement of Sunday services to accommodate the entertainment element of Shamanism. Since followers expect their gatherings to provide pleasure as well as religious edification, morning services are held at 11:00

a.m., followed by lunch and fellowship at the church, after which 'evening' services are held at 2.p.m. Thus, recreation and worship are combined, and members are further free to enjoy their own leisure and other forms of entertainment thereafter (No official statistics are available, but approximately 20% of churches have adopted this practice).

Services have become increasingly Shamanistic, with a gravitation towards spectacle and emotionally charged spiritual experience. Since the mid 1980s, many dignified, intelligent Christians have begun to move to those churches in which a more devout, sober and reverent atmosphere prevails, or are leaving the church altogether.

The essential conservatism of Shamanism has also had a detrimental effect on the Korean church. The ugly divisions which have led to the proliferation of denominations stem from a basic conservatism which is intolerant of dissent within the body¹⁹³. At the same time, because and egocentric, materialistic and non-ethical style of faith has been condoned by the Korean church, it does not display the unity or community which are the ideals of the Christian Apostolic church.

The competitiveness, materialism and avarice of the domestic

193. Lee Hun Ku, op cit., pp.130-131

Korean church are also evident in its foreign mission activities. Individual churches evangelise abroad with little cooperation or sense of common purpose, and Korean missions have been sharply criticised for their acquisitiveness.

Finally, the Korean Christian church is becoming something of a theatre, akin to the playground of the Shamanist gut, where the meaning and aim of the ritual is to invoke showers of blessing. Churches which witness the apparent success of Shamanistic churches begin to adopt similar growth-centred goals, defining success in the terms previously outlined, and believing that the true character of the church is realised and expressed in tangible, external results.

In other words, the Korean church is becoming increasingly humanist, and is in danger of being totally transformed through a process in which the essence of Shamanism entirely displaces the original tenets and principles of Christianity.

In the modern context of pluralism, the dilemma of the Korean Christian church is whether to strive towards an inclusive, catholic character, or to retain the cultural specificity of the established Korean Christian identity. The prime example of eclectic Christianity is the South American Catholic church. The

attempt at aboriginalisation and eclecticism within the African Independent Church has been a focus of scholarship, which has so far been inconclusive.

Further study of the Korean Christian church is required before new directions can be mapped.

Shamanism played a vital role in Korean Church growth, especially in the early period of the introduction of Christianity in Korea. Korean people appreciated Western civilisation after Korea became a Japanese colony. The Korean attitude towards Christianity was receptive, rather than resistant, because the West did not pose any threat of oppression. In the difficult economic and social conditions resulting from the loss of Korean sovereignty, the sensibility of the people expressed its neediness in the pursuit of blessing encouraged by Shamanism, and the convergence of these ideals with Christianity issued in church growth. The perceptions of heaven, God and blessing in Shamanism facilitated the acceptance of Christian faith, and Shamanistic forms of worship were readily adapted to the purposes of Christianity. The religious diligence and prayer of the Korean people sparked a faith revival, and the management of followers through the cell system stimulated church growth.

The church began to produce leaders who were prominent in the fields of art, culture and politics. Such figures projected a favourable image of the social functions of the church. Hence, the church became increasingly powerful. The Korean church experiences considerable internal division and there are many negative factors; however, Shamanistic elements have undoubtedly made a substantial and constructive contribution to church growth.

Two characteristics of shamanism which are individualism and the desire for blessing influence people to think only of themselves and desire blessings for their own families. This practice was matched by the Korean economic situation which resulted in the realisation of individualism in the 1960's and 1970's. There is a correlation between the economy and the church so that the Christian church is conducted in a spirit of individualisation.

CONCLUSION

In addition to shamanism the religious background of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism played a role in the preparation for some aspects of Korean church growth. When we realise the influence of other religions through study we can identify some elements of these religions which can be employed

in the spread of Christianity.

Therefore through comparative study of religions, especially a comparison between Christianity and other religions, we do not only concentrate on looking for the common characters of religions but also find useful elements in them for developing and joining with Christianity. If we are able to develop this aspect it will be a good contribution generally to the study of church growth and missiology.

CHAPTER SEVEN THE COMPARISON BETWEEN CHURCH GROWTH IN KOREA AND SOUTH AFRICA

1. Comparison between Zulu Religion and Shamanism

1.1. The Characteristics of Religion

Both African traditional religion and Korean shamanism are religions close to human life and have a conservatism in which it is important to believe in tradition. At the same time these religions have a strong absorptiveness on the one hand and an exclusivity on the other. Therefore while both of these religions can absorb a new religion there is no tension between the new religion and the established religion. Both of those religions still retain their own characteristics. South African independent churches and Korean churches still keep traditional religious elements and also maintain a robust Christian church. There is ingenious harmony of both elements.

1.2. The Concept of God

When we attempt to distinguish between a philosophy or ideology and a religion, it is apparent that the chief distinction of a religion is that there is a conception of God. It is generally agreed by scholars that Confucianism, for example, does not qualify as a religion because the notion of a deity is absent. It therefore seems as an 'ism', a philosophy, a system of ethics,

values and beliefs: it lacks the essential characteristic of a religion.

When introducing a new religion into a community, or assessing the impact of a new religion on traditional religion, it is vital to examine the initial conception of God, in order to understand the relationship and interaction between the two religions.

According to Melanchton,¹ it is in the heart where it is recognised that the human is a created thing like Adam. This heart is a mirror to reflect God so the heart of humanity becomes an organ of the body to recognise God. As a result many nations of the world have a concept of God.

John Hick² asserts that religions are different responses of different people to one God.

In Colossians 3:9-10, St. Paul argues that the Christian must become a new man after the image of God, indicating that humanity has lost the image of His creator.

In saying that we must be renewed, St. Paul means that we must

1. Bavinck, J.H., *The Impact of Christianity on the Non-Christian World*, trans., Soon-Tai, Kwon, Sung Kwang Publishing Co., Seoul, 1987, p.152.

2. John Hick, *The Second Christianity*, trans., Kim Seong Chul, Nathan Press, Seoul, 1991, pp.109-111.

regain the image of God. In other words, we must rediscover the knowledge of God. As we recover this knowledge, we will move towards an understanding of the image of God. To illustrate, children have a model of adulthood which they try to imitate. This model may be a parent, whom the child strives to be like. Likewise, in adulthood, people select role models who form the basis of their attempts to be and do what they admire.

In religious life, we choose as a model, a notion or concept of God on which we mould our religious practices. If the concept or notion of God is mistaken or false, people's efforts to achieve His likeness will be misplaced. There will be no true guidance or direction as to how they should really be.

Therefore, non-believers and followers of other religions who are uninterested in the image of the Christian God or the pursuit of the knowledge of God will not easily accept the concept of the Christian God. In other words, a group which already has a religious model which resembles Christianity will more easily accept the doctrines and faith of Christianity as a confirmation or consummation of their spiritual quest.

Thus, the type of concept of God held by a specific group of people plays an important role in church growth, either fostering or hindering the rooting of Christianity in a community.

1.3. The Role of the Traditional Priest

The South African isangoma and the Korean shaman both practice divination with certain objects and offer reasons for the cause of misfortune and any problems. They act as channels of communication and mediators between God and humanity.

However, the main role of the isangoma and shaman is not to worship God but, operating through the lower gods, they function to control spirits who make trouble, to resolve difficulties through the spirits and to diagnose diseases or identify problems.

The South African isangoma and the Korean shaman both have educational training courses to be senior priests in their own systems. In the case of the Korean shaman they have private discipleship training. In the case of South Africa, the isangoma is educated in a special training school in the northern part of KwaZulu-Natal and also trains privately.

In traditional religion, the shaman or isangoma serves as a mediator between humanity and the supernatural world in a position which is similar to the role of Christ in Christianity. In the Old Testament, the prophets, priests and king were mediators between God and the Israelites. The mediator partakes of both divine and human nature in the sight of God, and in the

eyes of men. The mediator is the only way through which God reveals himself to humankind, and by means of which humans react to God. When the shaman or isangoma rebukes the human, she or he serves as the mediator directed by God; when she or he petitions God according to human need and desire, she or he is functioning as an intermediary for humanity. Hence, the shaman or isangoma is the channel for contact between God and man.

Christians pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the supreme mediator, while in shamanism, it is the shaman who prays on behalf of the people: the people do not pray invoking the name of the shaman. A point of difference is that Jesus Christ can be the answer for human sin, but the shaman cannot assume this role.

Therefore, traditional religionists easily understand and accept the Christian concept of Jesus as mediator because it is figured in their established beliefs. For this reason, Korean Christians attribute to their pastors shamanistic powers and deify them, Zulu people show a similar reverence and deference towards ministers of the church.

1.4. Ancestor Veneration

Zulu religion and Korean shamanism are almost the same in the worshipping of ancestors. Even the memorial ceremonies for the ancestors goes back only three generations, as far as the great-

grandparents in both cases. In both cultures it is believed that by the fourth generation the spirits of the ancestors have gone.

1.5. No Concept of Salvation

African traditional religion has no concept of hell and because of the belief in which the dead ancestor is still alive they have no concept of salvation. The main focus of attention is therefore the reality of this material world. Korean shamanism also has a similar concept to that of the African. When people die, the deceased becomes a spirit. If the person was good he will be a good spirit; but if he led an evil life he will be an evil spirit or beast. So there is no concept of salvation in Korean shamanism. Both South African and Korean traditional religion are similar in being religions in which people desire only material blessings because of the lack of a belief in the concept of salvation.

1.6. Musical Instruments

Both Zulu religion and Korean shamanism use musical instruments in their ritual. In the case of Korean shamanism the Jango and the drum are the main instruments and in the Zulu religion also the drum is used. The common point is that each religion uses percussion instruments. The percussion instrument is a rhythmical instrument to enable people to become light-hearted and cheerful.

Similarly, we can see in modern popular music, rhythmical instruments play a prominent role. In traditional religions, in using rhythmical instruments the priest creates an exciting atmosphere for the ritual and softens the minds of the people so that they may easily invite the spirits or the gods to possess them.

This activity is related to the activity of the Pentecostal and the Full Gospel Churches which try to encourage revival with the use of musical instruments. South African charismatic white congregations also try to encourage revival with praise and musical instruments through appealing to the consciousness of the modern generation.

2. Comparison between the South African Independent Church and the Korean Church

2.1. Life-style and Belief

In the Zulu religion and shamanism, because of the lack of the concept of hell, even though people may sin, their hearts are not afraid because the shamans and izangoma pray for their sins and punishment is allayed. This belief remains when they become Christian. The Bible also says that in the blood of Jesus Christ they are free from punishment.

Much as the Koreans did, Zulu people readily accepted the new faith and integrated it into their existing spiritualistic religious orientation. Although this matrix of spirit-worship in some ways facilitated the acceptance of Christianity, it also exercised a negative influence. On the positive side, it prepared for the Christian concept of God, but it also tended to create a disjunction between the profession of Christianity and the expression of faith in ethics and lifestyle. Typically, in traditional spirit-worship, followers diligently attend and participate in ceremonies and rituals, but these are relatively disconnected from daily personal conduct or morality. When such believers convert to Christianity, the original pattern is often sustained: hearty participation in Sunday services can be completely divorced from ordinary life, and no commitment to Christian values ensues. Korean and Zulu Christians display similar tendencies in this respect.

A further noteworthy discrepancy between nominal adherence to Christianity and actual religious practice is apparent in that many Zulu Christian converts continue to operate as izangoma or consult izangoma for divination, and persist in performing rites honouring ancestral spirits. In such cases, Christianity has not displaced traditional belief, nor assimilated it, but has become an adjunct to established religion.

2.2. Developing of Aboriginal Hymns

The South African Independent churches developed many traditional hymns and also sing some lyrics to the traditional melodies. Most of the members do not have hymn books with the musical score, but sing in their own style, not relying on the original melody. However, in the case of the Korean church, there were not many Korean-style hymns based on the traditional melodies. The Korean Church accepted almost all of their hymns from the West.

2.3. The Minister in the Role of Traditional Priest

Christian ministers of both South African and Korea are requested to serve their members in the ministry in the role of traditional priests which means that ministers must assist in the members' lives in every way, for example, one of the Korean members asked his minister to pray for a cow which was experiencing difficulty in giving birth, and in the case of the African church one of my members asked me to pray that her house would not fall down in the heavy rainy season.

2.4. The Different Attitudes to Accepting Christianity

The South African independent church retains some aspects of the practice of Western Christianity. However, the Korean Church accepted in its entirety the whole practice of Western

Christianity which the missionaries introduced. Therefore, in South Africa the independent church established and developed African theology. However, in the case of the Korean church, even though there was some aboriginal movement, the Korean independent church is not developed and most of the Korean church followed the Westernised Christian church, never separating from the missionaries.

2.5. Return to Traditional Religion from Christianity

The Korean shaman Hae Soon Hong was a Christian who evangelised and attracted many new believers to the church. For fifteen years she was an exemplary Christian through whom many were blessed. She was seen as a model believer, known affectionately as the 'Hallelujah Lady'. However, difficulties arose concerning her son; she fell ill and experienced hallucinations, and was not helped by prayer and the laying on of hands. In order to find a cure, she was introduced to a shaman who initiated and trained her in shamanistic ritual and practice. After eight years' apprenticeship, she became an independent shaman, believing that she was called to serve the local spirit(god) of her native traditional religion.

A further case in the South African context, is a case in which a convert to Christianity returned to traditional religion. In Luganda, near Marianhill where I operate a mission, I visited an

isangoma and witnessed her rituals. She indicated that she had previously been a Catholic, and still displays Catholic icons of Mary and Jesus in her abode.

In another example from Maputoland, Northern Kwa-Zulu Natal, a female isangoma (Ms. Aldina Qwabe) had been a practising Christian.

In analysing these instances, it seems legitimate to suggest that changes and transitions between traditional religions and Christianity occur without difficulty for many believers. Just as traditional religionists are receptive to Christianity, so Christians with a cultural background of traditional religion readily revert to the older belief system. Thus, there are certain common elements which allow for movement and transference, and the main point of my study is to isolate and define the nature of that common ground, and investigate how this phenomenon stimulates church growth.

3. Comparison of Church Growth in the Respective Churches

3.1. The Main Element of Growth

The South African independent church grew rapidly, the main cause being the mystical worship style. However, the cause of Korean church growth is the Bible study movement. As a result both the

South African and Korean churches involved huge numbers of church members. The Korean church developed theological schools, seminaries and theologians of high academic standing, but the South African Independent church unlike the Korean church in this respect because the independent church concentrated on joining traditional practice to the church. But the Korean church concentrated on the study of the Bible.

3.2. Political and Racial Oppression

In the case of South Africa the political and racial conditions influenced the formation of the independent church, and the spread of Christianity in Africa was closely linked with colonial exploitation and oppression.

In South Africa under the apartheid system, the African independent church grew easily because the emphasis on maintaining tribal or ethnic identity influenced the way in which Christianity was accepted. The introduction of Christianity did not mean the total abandonment of traditional beliefs, in favour of a new theology. It is difficult to find a truly intercultural or multicultural Christian community anywhere in the world. However, there was no apartheid in Korea. Nevertheless, the Korean church was subjected to Japanese rule during the period 1910 to 1945 and also suffered under the communist massacre during the Korean war from 1950 to 1953. These oppressions influenced Korean

church growth. Paradoxically, It is evident that the Christian church grew well under oppression, as was the case in the early Christian church in the Roman period.

3.3. The Elements of Traditional Religion which are absorbed into Church Growth

Christian church growth is intrinsically related to the nature of the traditional religion³. This is illustrated by the difficulties experienced by converts to Christianity in separating from their traditional societies. It is problematic for Korean converts, for example, to maintain bonds with their families who practise ancestor worship, which is prohibited by Christianity. Therefore, if converts are able to find similarities and parallels between Christianity and their traditional beliefs, so that acceptance of the new religion does not entail a complete rejection of and separation from their established religions principles and forms, the rate of conversion is increased. This is the reason why congregations tend to segregate racially: different groups develop or maintain practices and forms of worship in accordance with their own cultural and linguistic norms.

The black independent church of South Africa allowed the

3. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*(William B. Eerdmans, USA, 1970) p.246 ff.

retention of certain elements of traditional religion, and therefore grew much more rapidly than the mainline churches which continued to uphold and identify with what remained fundamentally Western customs, traditions and practices.

3.4. Missionary Work for Education

When the missionaries came to South Africa they also founded schools and tried to translate the Bible into African languages. The missionaries who worked in Korea also started schools and translated the Bible into Korean. Korean mission schools produced many elite groups and these elite groups led Korean political, social and religious society, particularly the distributors of the Bible who worked very hard to sell the Bible everywhere and also introduce the Christian faith. Many people read the Bible to acquire modern culture and civilisation because at the end of the twentieth century Christianity was introduced as a Western civilisation and philosophy. Therefore many people went to church and accepted Christianity. Missionary education was successful. However, in the case of South Africa, the Bible has not yet been distributed to all people, and many people are uneducated and illiterate and therefore cannot read the Bible. However, people prefer to go to church to receive healing.

3.5. Studying of Traditional Culture and Language

There is an actual and close relationship between the Gospel and the culture of the people who receive the Gospel. The Gospel can be spread only through the medium of the language of the people for whom the Gospel is intended. Language is a treasure-house of spiritual and cultural power. The person who enters the sanctuary of the language encounters the cultural heritage of a people, e.g. a Christian who gives the Gospel to a certain person has to find an appropriate name in the native language which identifies and represents God appropriately. If the chosen name is not appropriate, it may create a false impression of the nature of God as perceived by Christianity, or be connected with pagan belief in such a way as to destroy the Christian conception. The same difficulty is encountered in attempting to translate the words 'The Bible' and preserve the integrity of the concept. In the case of the Bible, the early apostles used the Greek unhesitatingly in explaining their message.

Mission history supplies us with several useful examples of the dangers of translation. Language, which is one of the staple factors in the development of culture, is invariably used as the entrance into the spirit of a people by the missionary. There are various methods and strategies for the penetration of a culture for the purpose of transmitting the gospel, language being crucial in all cases.

- i. Some people are unable to understand if the instruction in the new religion does not occur in the form of a poem.
- ii. Some people believe that religious truth can only be conveyed in a whisper, e.g. the street evangelist is not well-received in the market-place.
- ii. Religious instruction which is transmitted in the form of esoteric, mystical, symbolic knowledge, such as parables, touches the audience profoundly, e.g. the Korean people are so steeped in Confucianism and philosophical thought that they are highly responsive to concepts or ideas which are conveyed through intricate and complex constructions, believing that such language invariably contains profound and noble truths.

For Koreans, religious ideas have traditionally been received through the medium of Chinese script, e.g. Buddhism and other dogma. Such teachings were respected and valued partially because of the difficulty of comprehending them. In contrast, the accessibility of Christian doctrine, presented in simple Korean, initially rendered it less impressive. Even within Western Christianity, some people consider Catholicism, with its meditational and mystical features, more arcane and erudite than Protestantism.

iv. When the message of the Gospel is dramatically represented in performance it finds a ready response, e.g. ref. Acts 14:8-12.

In Acts 2 (The day of Pentecost) the speaking in tongues by the early converts signifies the attempt by God to communicate using the languages specific to various cultures.

The translation and proclamation of the Gospel becomes meaningful when it occurs with reference to the context and lifestyle of the local people. Parables need to be clarified by using illustrations drawn from the experience of the people being evangelised. For example, a reference such as the occasion when Jesus was asked to heal a woman suffering from haemorrhage and replied that the bread of life should not be given to dogs, requires contextual adaptation. A further example is when St. Paul addressed a crowd at Ar-e-op'a-gus (Acts, 17:19). As missionaries, it is our task to explain Christianity in terms of the traditional idiom and culture. The Gospel of God's heaven is proclaimed to the human consciousness in the language of human experience through Jesus Christ who assumed human form. In this way, the Gospel is preached through the missionary who adopts the language and culture of the local mission field.

3.6. The Growth after becoming a Separate Independent Church

African people were not satisfied with their church services as led by white missionaries. They could not sing and dance loudly and freely and some of the African leaders protested to the missionary government. The Ethiopian Church was the first separate independent church group. After that many separate independent churches were founded. Each independent church grew rapidly.

Much church division occurred in Korea but this division contributed to church growth in other ways. Even though they divided into small churches, that phenomenon encouraged each divided church to become a strong church. They were in competition in trying to attract more members and to be self-sufficient. South African independent churches also tried to be self-sufficient, especially financially. Throughout the church history of the world when the church is divided each church has grown rapidly.

3.7. Self-Growth

The Korean church and the South African independent church grew by themselves. The causes for becoming self-supporting churches in South Africa and Korea were different, even if the situation was similar. In Korea the missionaries had a meeting and decided

not to support young Korean churches any more. They took that principle from the mission policy of Nevius who had worked in China. Nevius' policy asserts that each church planted by the missionaries could stand by itself: self-governing, self-supporting and self-standing. So the Korean churches were obliged to help themselves. The members loved their church. Korean ministers worked very hard, and thus promoted church growth. South African missionaries did not put into practice any principle like Nevius' mission policy to create self-standing churches but African people who separated from the missionary churches had then to stand by themselves. Ministers encouraged their members to contribute financially so that they could grow, and also each member's faith grew.

4. Common Factors and Divergences

The contribution of traditional religion to church growth led to the developing of an aboriginal theology and an aboriginal style of worship. South African independent churches contributed to the development of Black theology and African theology and some of the Korean churches developed Minjung theology, Arirang Theology, Theology of Han and Liberation Theology. However, from the perspective of Christian practice the result of the contribution of traditional elements in each church was different. In the case of the independent church they separated

from missionary churches and wanted to involve traditional elements in the church. They had no disagreement with the members. Some churches criticised the deep aboriginalisation of the independent church but in Korea, the churches followed the missionaries' instructions without any refusal when aboriginal elements were increasingly included in the Christian church. The church was involved in an argument or dispute as to whether it was a heretical church or not because the Korean church threw off Confucianism and preferred Western culture. The distinctions between traditional culture and Christian culture were clear.

The reason why church growth flourishes in animist and shamanist societies is that these religions always co-exist with other religions or absorb them.

Even though there is little resistance to new religions, Animism and shamanism offer a form of preparation for evangelism as there are some elements of these religions which are beneficial to Christianity.

Therefore the role of traditional religion in Christian church growth in both South Africa and Korea has been extremely important.

5. The Reasons Why the Fruits of Evangelism are poor in Asian Countries

Mahatma Ghandi stated that becoming a Christian seems to entail becoming a westernized foreigner and hence the individual fears becoming an alien amidst his own people. This is an almost universal perception.

Commonly, when people of non-western descent wish to convert to Christianity, difficulties arise through a resistance to crossing racial, cultural or language boundaries. However, the Korean people, perhaps because they were a unified, homogeneous group, showed little reluctance in assimilating the new faith into their own belief system.

The reason why people of other religions often defend their own positions and refuse to convert is because conversion is not simply a change in belief, but has complex political, social and religious implications for the whole society.

The 'Homogeneous unit principle' in evangelism which is formulated by Donald Macgavran is a sociological observation which is commonplace in human culture.

Evangelism is often obstructed by a lack of insight and understanding regarding the particular nature of a specific

culture or group.

In the case of India a large number of missionaries have been dispatched but still Christians are in the minority, even though the church produced many famous theologians.

In Burma, converts from Buddhism constitute 5% of the Christian population. The bulk of Christians were previously adherents of animism. It is evident in other Buddhist and Hindu countries that very few devotees of these religions convert to Christianity.

When western missionaries went to China in the 19th Century, they were referred to by the Chinese as the 'Western evil' or 'white devils'. The Chinese perceived western education as a threat to the survival and integrity of their culture. They therefore thwarted and obstructed the whole enterprise of western missionaries to the best of their ability.

Asians have enormous reverence for their cultural heritage and are reluctant to accept changes to their values and beliefs. Basically, they tend to believe that their own culture is superior to that of westerners, and although they will acknowledge and accept western technological innovations, they cling to established traditions.

In most developed countries, Christianity is the dominant religion. In addition, modern civilization originated in countries where Christianity prevailed. However, there is an ironic exception in Japan, which is highly developed, but has not accommodated or absorbed christianity to any significant degree.

Why it is that Korea and Japan, which are closely related geographically, culturally, and in their traditions, and which experienced roughly parallel industrial development, should have responded so differently to the influence of Christianity, is difficult to establish. The reason perhaps lies in the fact that, since their primary traditional religion taught polytheism, ancestor-worship and the presence of gods in the physical features of the universe, the notion of one God almighty was alien and uncongenial.

The Japanese believe in many hybrid gods and everything is god. They go to the temple for Shintoism for birth rituals, and to the Christian church for marriage and to the Buddhist temple for funeral rites. They are used to moving between different religions. It is difficult for them to accept Christianity, which is a monotheistic and exclusive religion. In other words, the view of God is related to Christian church growth.

Arabic people had a polytheistic concept of deity, but also subscribed to monotheism in terms of traditional belief, and were

therefore susceptible to the monotheism of Islam, and were able to embrace the notion of Allah without the necessity of a fundamental paradigm, shift.

6. The Results of Comparative Study

We can receive some instruction from the comparisons between Christianity and other religions. Firstly, modern missionaries often have the wrong impression that other religions are in darkness, error and decline, when other religions still have a tenacious, active power in people's lives. In fact this sense of superiority is against the basic principles of Christianity, as contained in the Gospel. Secondly, other religions do not only consist of pure religious elements but are also complex constructions of political, social and cultural elements.

To study church growth, especially in the third world context (Africa and Asia), it is vital to determine the role of traditional religion in church growth.

Justin⁴ said that the world of the Gentiles and the Christian Gospel have a common base or point of contact in some areas. With these features Christians can spread the Gospel to the Gentiles. Justin had already posited this theory in the second

4. Bavinck, J.H., op cit., p.37.

century A.D. Nowadays it will be meaningful to research the common contact point between traditional religion and Christianity as this will be useful in bringing people to Christianity.

The thoughts of the people in the mission field are analyzed in three ways: firstly, universalistic aspects; secondly, dualistic aspects, and thirdly, materialistic aspects. Although these three aspects of thought exist, the nuances are different according to local tradition and the condition of the climate.

The common point of these three aspects is human centrality and egocentricity.

When we perceive that the image of God inheres distortedly in these three aspects, we hold in our hands the key to the understanding of the aboriginal work of theology.

One of the aboriginal mission policies of the Apostle Paul is the application of the theory of the Redeemer. Paul joined the concept called "descending-ascending Redeemer", which is the essence of the Theory of the Redeemer of gnosticism, to the idea of how to understand Jesus.

The place in which the most change is shown in the contrast between modern civilization and tribal religions is probably

South Africa because it is where the White minority ruled longer and more recently than they ruled anywhere else in the world. South Africa is also one of the African areas in which the Christian churches are most widely spread. One of the examples is the traditional village called PheZulu in Botha's Hill, near Durban, in which traditional dance and isangoma divining is demonstrated. The inhabitants also sing songs, but instead of the traditional Zulu songs they sing Christian songs in which the words "Hallelujah" and the name of "Jesus" frequently appear.

CONCLUSION

1. Christian Church Growth

The term 'church growth' can mean numerical growth and external growth. However, we can say that real growth is that new converts become disciples of Christ. In this sense, church growth means that the Gospel is registered in the heart of each person rather than the registering of the name in the registration book of the church. When the Gospel is registered in the heart of new believers a seed of the Gospel is germinated and when the seed bears fruit we refer to it as mission.

2. Traditional religions and church growth

In Chapter 7, through the comparative study of South African church growth and Korean church growth, we found that some common elements between traditional religion and Christianity played a very important role in the spread and growth of Christianity, like the common concept of God which is shared by Christianity and traditional religion. Therefore when we work in the mission field it is immensely helpful to study thoroughly the concept of traditional religion before offering the Gospel to the people. If evangelism occurs in such a way that the receivers of the Christian message are able to accept it and jettison the irrelevancies from their existing belief systems, the progress

of evangelism is easier. Therefore, after understanding the contact point of faith between traditional religion and Christianity which is hidden in the hearts of people, and is concealed by the husk of culture, we can use the elements of these contact points to try to touch them, and then the Gospel will be effective. These activities will be our message.

3. Aboriginalism

All of the nations have traces of the image of God in various forms. The Christian faith must be rooted in the locality in which the Gospel is disseminated. In order to succeed, the Christian Gospel must be divested of the particularities of westernised culture and assume the apparel of indigenous practices. It is possible that we may be able to accept and unite in the way of Christian life some customs which were regarded as agencies of pagan belief in past periods.

The adaptation of Christianity to indigenous culture is significant in the translation and preaching of the Gospel in indigenised terms. As Kramer has stated, such adaptation is particularly necessary for clear comprehension of the primary concepts of Christianity in relation to the specifics of a local context. However, it is not beneficial to employ a distorted vocabulary in this enterprise, because such distortion compromises the Christian Gospel unjustifiably and subverts the

aims of evangelism.

However there are certain customs which can usefully be appropriated. For instance, the system of respect amongst the Chinese and Koreans does not originate from the fifth commandment - it has a different source, but is a vital component of Christian ethics. It is necessary for missionaries to be able to distinguish between the rapprochement which fosters Christian growth, and that which erodes it.

The translation and proclamation of the Gospel becomes meaningful when it occurs with reference to the context and lifestyle of the local people. Parables, etc., need to be clarified by using illustrations drawn from the experience of the people being evangelised.

4. PROPOSAL

When we spread the Gospel, what does God do with the small fragments of knowledge of those religions which are in the lives of non-Christians? That is the role and work of missionaries in the mission field and also of scholars. Thus I wrote this thesis to develop better mission methods to research their effects and influence on conversion and to find the communication links between Christianity and traditional religions. We need more information in the case of other countries and tribes. There is

an oriental proverb that states that when you know your enemy well you can win all of a hundred times in each of a hundred battles. So I hope that in the future after my study, other scholars and theologians will continue to research in the field of Christianity and traditional religion and may develop further principles and methods to promote church growth and missiology.

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